Margaret P. Rust.

1930.

CHAUCER AND SPENSER

PUBLISHED BY

MACLEHOSE, JACKSON & CO.

Publishers to the University

MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD., LONDON

New York - - *The Macmillan Co.*

Toronto - - - *The Macmillan Co. of Canada*

London - - - *Simpkin, Hamilton and Co.*

Cambridge - - *Bowes and Bowes*

Edinburgh - - *Douglas and Foulis*

Sydney - - - *Angus and Robertson*

MCMXX

A COMMENTARY
ON THE POETRY OF
CHAUCER & SPENSER

BY

ADOLPHUS ALFRED JACK

SOMETIME FELLOW OF PETERHOUSE, CAMBRIDGE
CHALMERS PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

GLASGOW
MACLEHOSE, JACKSON & CO.
PUBLISHERS TO THE UNIVERSITY
1920

TO

SIR A. W. WARD

LITT.D., LL.D., F.B.A.

MASTER OF PETERHOUSE, CAMBRIDGE

MY DEAR MASTER,

It will not be thought, I hope, that in dedicating this book to you I am seeking, under the cover of your name, to advance a claim to learning for so merely modern a Commentary. You at any rate know me well enough to believe that it is only as a fellow-collegian, and not with any presumption of other fellowship, that I desire to associate with the work of a Peterhouse man the name of one who for nearly twenty years has been so much to Peterhouse.

Faithfully and gratefully yours,

A. A. JACK.

King's College,
Aberdeen.

PREFACE

THIS book has come together somewhat occasionally. Originally conceived as two of several essays designed to consider some of our older poets from the standpoint of modern interest, it has finally taken the shape of a detailed critical account of Chaucer and Spenser.

The explanation is that while the essays were still incomplete, I was asked to deliver, in the Session 1914-1915, the Clark Lectures in Trinity College, Cambridge, and, as I was then busy with those two poets, I chose them as my subject.

Literary essays and class-room comment are different things, and to turn my material into lectures during the stress of the National preoccupation was not easy. Nevertheless, doing what I could, I found myself as of course hastily altering, both by omission and addition, and in the upshot, I am afraid, deferring the interests of the general reader to those of the student. And now when later I have tried again to recast in more literary form, I am not sure that I have ended by satisfying either party.

But I have had two guiding considerations. The first was to preserve my original standpoint, and to keep

the poems constantly under review, not as documents in the history of literature, but as emotional compositions which may or may not have retained their power to please. What is the interest of this poem or that poem to the modern reader is practically the sole question with which I have continuously concerned myself. The second was to avoid encumbering my pages with information not strictly essential to the understanding of the poetry, and with this object I have avoided as far as possible reprinting what can be found in well-known books. Some commonly known facts have had to be re-stated, but on this head I have been as short as was consistent with an intelligible narrative. The result is a running commentary that is likely to be less serviceable to those who have not read the poets than to those who either already know them or are in process of making their acquaintance. Another purpose, perhaps more useful, these pages might have been intended to fulfil, but I should say at once that they had their own, and that it was not to serve as an Introduction preparatory to the study of the poems. That task has already been performed so often and so ably there was no need to re-attempt it.

In regard to my obligations I should be ungrateful if I did not acknowledge the help I have had from Morley and Skeat, from the writings of The Master of Peterhouse, Dr. Saintsbury, and Mr. Pollard, and especially from Mr. Ker's essay which first opened my eyes to the greatness of Troilus and Cressida. Professor de Selincourt would not wish to be responsible for the

attitude I adopt towards Spenser, but I have made free use of his scholarship.

I should add that when I first wrote the Sixth Chapter I had not seen Mr. Phelps's book on the Romantic Revival, but the information which directed me to several of the more curious poems was doubtless derived from his volume, and I have since been indebted to it for some additions as well as corrections in detail.

My object has been always to speak at first hand, and if my knowledge had allowed me I would always have done so. As it is, I have to thank my brother, Dr. W. R. Jack, whose acquaintance with foreign literature is responsible for the substance of what is said of Boccaccio's dealing with the Troilus and Cressida story.

Miss A. M. Mackenzie, M.A., has very kindly prepared the full index, and I am further obliged to her for giving her attention to the proof.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Chaucer's Life	1
II.	Chaucer	22
III.	The Chaucer Apocrypha and Imitations	117
IV.	Spenser's Life	141
V.	Spenser	153
VI.	Criticisms and Imitations	265
VII.	The Faeries of Spenser	320
	Appendix	340
Note A.	On the Legend of Good Women	340
,, B.	Spenser's Similes	346
,, C.	Spenser's Pictures of Soft Peace	353
,, D.	On the Uses of Archaic Language	357
	Index	363

CHAPTER I

CHAUCER'S LIFE

"It is worth while to observe," says Wordsworth in the preface to the second edition of the "Lyrical Ballads," "that the affecting parts of Chaucer are almost always expressed in language pure and universally intelligible even to this day." And if this statement at all surprises us it is solely because we have been accustomed to read the "Canterbury Tales" in their order. The Prologue, by much the hardest of Chaucer's writings, is full of descriptions of costume, articles of ornament and clothing that are no longer in use, the names of which consequently are strange. But, leaving out of account such obsolete words, there is little difficulty, some perhaps to the eye, almost none to the ear.

This ease in reading Chaucer dates from comparatively modern times, and is due to Thomas Tyrwhitt, who, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century,[1] explained the rules governing the pronunciation of final 'e.' Till then, the eighteenth century had thought of the poet, in reality a master of extraordinarily smooth versification, as of some old rugged humourist who stumbled into verse, and of his writings as the proper quarry for scholarship. "How few are there," exclaims Dryden, in his preface to what is still the least

[1] 1775.

inadequate modernising of Chaucer, "How few are there who can read Chaucer so as to understand him perfectly? And if imperfectly, then with less profit and no pleasure. It is not for the use of some old Saxon friends that I have taken those pains with him: let them neglect my version, because they have no need of it. I made it for their sakes, who understand sense and poetry as well as they, when that sense and poetry is put into words which they understand." Yet, in the result, the final popularisation of Chaucer was not owing to Dryden's "Fables," but to Tyrwhitt and Skeat. It was not modernising but scholarship that made Chaucer a modern author, and his language so transpicuous that one of our last and best criticisms comes from a French source, the felicitous monograph of Professor Legouis, feeling freely Chaucer's charm and speaking freshly of it. The modern reader lacks, indeed, nothing to-day but some slight general knowledge of the contemporary conditions. It is not the language of Chaucer but the atmosphere surrounding him that makes him now an antique.

His England was a sparsely populated country, a great part of it under forest, but in the main, and in its pleasant counties, a countryside loosely sprinkled with small towns where there was some concentration of population. London, the largest, was the only city in the country with numbers considerably above 10,000, and even London's population was only 40,000. Surprise is sometimes expressed that a descendant of vintners should have found so easy an access to the

Court. But where the population is small the educated class cannot be large, and where classes are not large no class is sufficient for itself. There was a mixture of all those raised above the common people—the mixture that made it possible for the "Canterbury Tales" to be written, a mixture and jostling of classes, just as there was a mixture and jostling of town and country.

This contrast and jumble of mediaeval life is to be found everywhere. On the one hand there were the palaces of the princes with their libraries and stained-glass windows, on the other all the level squalor of ordinary life. Most of the houses were small, little more than two-roomed cottages of timber and plaster, with windows generally of oiled linen, and sometimes a chimney luxuriously replacing the customary hole for the escape of smoke. We have still the contract for the building of a well-to-do citizen's house, and a priced inventory of a vintner's goods and furniture. The cost of one equals about £150 in the money of to-day, that of the other some £90. Books, that is manuscripts, were too dear for common use, and the possession of a small Bible involved an outlay of some thirty modern pounds.[2] The wills of some Church dignitaries are

[2] In the Prologue to the "Legend of Good Women," A Text, l. 273, Cupid says to Chaucer—

> Yis! god wot, sixty bokes olde and newe
> Hast thou thy-self alle fulle of stories grete,
> That bothe Romains and eek Grekes trete
> Of sundry wemen—

The Bible is a long book, and we need not suppose that, on the average, books cost more than £10 a volume, but even so, some

recorded in Bishop Stafford's register at Exeter (1395-1419): the largest library contained only fourteen volumes. In the ordinary house, people, in the daytime, made use of the one living room, the hall; at night, they slept naked and often two in a bed. Mr. Coulton reminds us that the great lack in domestic life was that of privacy.

In moral and social affairs there was the same mixture. Usury was looked at askance, but a not uncommon rate of interest was twenty per cent.: there were laws against corrupt meat and fish, yet such food was supplied to the lepers: there was knighthood, but the ransoming of prisoners was a purely business transaction: though there was no fixed conscription, there was a capricious levying of men from the counties both for native and foreign wars. William Morris looked back affectionately on the trade guilds of the Middle Age, but, in summer, men worked twelve hours a day: there were not the slums of our great cities, but Mr. Coulton tells us that "four great visitations of bubonic plague occurred in Chaucer's lifetime"[3]: the penal law was very severe, but judges were bribable: private life was not safe and homicides escaped, if sometimes by taking sanctuary and being outlawed, by pleading clergy, or by paying a fine, more often completely, owing to the absence of any proper civil control.

sixty entailed a large expenditure, enough to build and furnish two houses, even if we need not take the number literally. This passage, therefore, is some evidence of the ease of Chaucer's circumstances.

[3] "Chaucer's England."

The same tale is to be told of morals. Marriage was an indissoluble tie, yet dissolutions could be procured from Rome. Easily contracted by verbal promise and even between those whom we should now account children, it was a matter more for the parents than for the parties, and often frankly a bargain. When daughters were beaten those young wives were beaten too. "Thomas the Reeve," says Mr. Coulton, "wished to chastise his concubine with a cudgel, but casually struck and killed the child in her arms, and the jury brought it in a mere accident." In such days there was the concomitant license of the "Feast of Fools." People prized their high birth irrespective of marriage. In the romance of "Parise the Duchess" the hero Hugh, discovering his long lost mother, asks anxiously who his father was. "For," said he, "it is better any day to be a good bastard than a bad man, however legitimate." Conformably with this, priests, though unmarried, were by no means always childless. Enumerating the members of a knight's family living with the knight in his house, Adam du Petit Pont, a writer of the twelfth century, mentions the illegitimate children of both husband and wife. It will not be supposed that in speech the inhabitants of the castles were always decently mannerly. Instructions not to say this and not to say that are eloquent of what might be said. Even in religious matters, where the Church ruled, there was, at least among priests, a surprising freedom of discussion. In this catalogue I have omitted only one thing of first importance, the barbarity and publicity of

punishments. Nothing coarsens feeling more surely than public cruelty.

What was likely to be the tone of the romances? We should remember that they were written mainly for the idle folk, that is to say, mainly for the women, whose main mediaeval business was loving and who formed the majority of those able to write or read. The most interesting fact in Mr. Thomas Wright's valuable "Womankind in Western Europe" is that of the education of gentlewomen. "Learning to read or write was not considered to form a necessary part of a gentleman's education until a comparatively late period; his instruction was in arms and in the active pursuits of life. In the families of lesser rank the female children were more frequently sent for education into a convent, where reading and writing and some degree of learning would be taught as a matter of course. As they grew up they formed at home the more knowing part of the household." The atmosphere in the castle was one of love and war. It was the duty of the male to establish preeminence by martial achievements, that of the lady to reward him with her love. Under this convention the lady did not always wait to be sued, but gave her approving glances to the victor. The knight might be married or have no intention of marriage. The tie between him and the lady "whose bright eyes rained influence" might result in matrimony, but in itself it was independent of matrimonial ideas and purely chivalric. One is not surprised that Courts of Love were established, sometimes, no doubt,

in fact, more commonly, probably, in imagination, composed at first, and always chiefly, of ladies, to decide difficult cases in romance. Here is a judgment given by Queen Eleanor of England in the latter half of the twelfth century, to explain which, says Mr. Wright, "it must be stated that according to this law, love was considered to be incompatible with marriage, which, under feudalism, was a mere affair of political or personal interest. A knight fell in love with a lady, who, having fallen in love on her side with another knight, could not return his affection, inasmuch as it was part of the law that you could only have one love at a time. But in this case, the lady, not wishing to deprive him of all hope, had promised to take him for her knight in case she lost the other knight whom she loved. A little later she was married to the latter, and then the other knight demanded the fulfilment of her promise. The lady denied all obligation, and replied that, so far from losing the knight she loved she now had him for her husband. The case was referred to Queen Eleanor, who gave judgment that the lady was obliged to keep her promise to the second knight, because having taken the other for her husband, she had lost him as her lover." Those who please may believe this story. Such little sense as lay behind it may be found in a familiar distinction between passion and a more staid affection; "a good marriage," as the phrase goes, being thought of rather in the terms of domesticity and friendship. At the least, the existence of such stories is proof of the atmosphere the romanticists wished to induce.

Under these conditions one can understand how "Troilus and Cressida" came to be written, a romance which dwells, with what to us is tedious minuteness, on the longings of the lover. There were four degrees of love an anonymous troubadour tells us—

> The first is that of hesitating,
> And the second that of supplicating,
> And the third that of being listened to,
> And the fourth is called that of accepted lover.[4]

The book that throws most light on the tone of romantic ethics is "The Romance of the Rose," yet strictly speaking it is not a romance, indeed a melange, hardly to be definitely described as a whole.

At the beginning it is straightforward enough. A Lover, falling into a dream, comes to the garden of Delight, the garden of which the porter is fair Idleness. He is admitted and sees in the centre a lovely Rose guarded by Danger, Shame, Fear, and Jealousy. After various attempts, Reason having in vain tried to moderate his passion, the Lover at last manages to kiss the Rose but not to bear it away. A fortress is raised against him, and he sits down to complain.

And here end the four thousand odd lines written by the original author, Guillaume de Lorris : an unfinished

[4] Altogether, the game and craft of mediaeval love-making, for craft it was, is treated with such seriousness that one is no longer astonished at Chaucer's reference—

> The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne
> Th'assay so hard, so sharp the conquering,
> The dredful joy that alwey slit so yerne,
> Al this mene I by love.

allegory; though a fragment, a rather lovely arrangement of sweet lovers' fancies. No doubt the general moral is nothing profitable, the whole drift being "Love above All," but, leaving this out of the question, there is a full tone of delight. One can hear it in the old English version, the first sixteen hundred lines of which could surely have been written, if evidence of style has any value, by no one but Chaucer in his youth,

> Minstrales, and eek Jogelours,
> That wel to singe dide hir peyne.
> Somme songe songes of Loreyne;
> For in Loreyne hir notes be
> Ful swetter than in this contree.

while equally fresh are the couplets—

> For fairer playing non saugh I
> Than playen me by that riveer.

and

> For yonge folk, wel witen ye,
> Have litel thought but on hir play.

This poem, left unfinished by Guillaume de Lorris in 1230 or 1240, was taken up and completed forty years later by Jean de Meun, Jean Clopinel of the town of Meun on the Loire. Clopinel added to it some eighteen thousand lines, and so may be accounted the chief author, but his portion is not of the character of the earlier part. That was a fully fitted out love allegory, a coherent story, interspersed with observations, and occasional abstract discussions. In the continuation, the story crops up only occasionally, the whole interest lying in the digressions. Nor is the sentiment of these in line with the sentiment of

the beginning. We have a free and abundant comment upon social happenings and ideas, discussions concerning the new theology, communism, the ways of women, an age of the free; rambling holdings forth, by Reason, Genius, or the Author, on all the current topics that especially interested the thirteenth century.

This portion of the poem, far the longer, and that which gave it its fame, is written by a good-hearted man, but the doctrines it preaches are much on the side of license, in part perhaps not meant wholly seriously, a pronouncement in antagonism to the accepted monastic ideal. And doubtless it was this, the influence of revulsion feeling, that gave it its vogue. Further, it appealed to male readers from its entirely frank attitude towards women. In the romances the female had appeared in the exalted character of the knight's lady, the pedestalled heroine, and this appearance, since beyond reality, had become tiresome, not only to most men, but even to many of the lauded sex. The freedom of Jean de Meun's satire had thus much of the relief that always attaches to shock where a burdensome tradition is in question. That its success was a success "de scandale" we know from Chaucer's penitent reference,[5] and more especially from the direct protest of Christine de Pisan in her "Epitre au dieu d'Amour,"[6] written in 1399 in defence of women, and

[5] "The Legend of Good Women."

[6] Christine de Pisan herself was one of the instructed literary women of her time and thus raised above her female contemporaries. Born in 1363, the daughter of Thomas de Pisan, a physician and astrologer in favour with the King of France, she received from her

specifically referring to the "Romance." Yet, however formally reprobated, the poem was not unpleasing to the majority, and there was even active defence against Christine de Pisan's attack.

No book influenced Chaucer more, and, allowing for the fact that he was a sensible man and no preacher of license, we may say that much of its outlook was his. In religious matters Chaucer was as liberal as was reasonably possible in his age; his view of women, though not unkindly, was not high; and he shared the idealisms, if idealisms they can be called, of Jean de Meun—his mild communistic feeling and his pleasure in the absence of restraint. Nowhere in Chaucer is there the least feeling of social law.

But besides this one sees the influence in particular passages. The Wife of Bath's assault on Jankyn, "as sound a piece of British *horse-play* as was put together in that century of Time," is an obvious parody of the jealous husband's beating of his wife. The manners of the Prioress in the Prologue, and Chaucer's praise of the "Former Age," have equally their counterparts in "The Romance of the Rose." Here will be found Lucretia, Dido, Phyllis, Oenone, Medea, Virginia, Nero, Croesus, and Ganelon. There are passages

father a learned education. In her later years, after the deaths of father and husband, she was poor, and is credited with having been the first professional authoress. In 1429 she wrote a poem in honour of the Maid of France. That such a woman should have resented the tone of "The Romance of the Rose" is no proof that it was generally resented even by her own sex in an age which knew nothing of modern decorum.

parallel to that dealing with the caprice of Fortune in "The House of Fame," and that in "The Nun's Priest's Tale" about Foreknowledge and Free Will. What Cressida urges against the restraints of matrimony, and Chaucer's view that love is not to be constrained by "Maistrye," these and other things can be traced. Jean de Meun speaks respectfully of Alchemy. From "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale" one must suppose that Chaucer was not always wholly incredulous. There is plenty of discursive talk about Astrology just in Chaucer's tone of unwilling and circumscribed belief. It is true that Comets have nothing to do with the deaths of Kings, yet they influence Earth.[7] The curious doctrine that each man's death-day is so fixed that he cannot retard, though he may anticipate it, runs thus in Mr. Ellis's translation—

> For 'tis within no mortal's power,
> When comes the inevitable hour,
> To stave off death with leech or herb,
> Or his strong arm one moment curb,
> Though on the other hand one may
> Shuffle life's coil ere nature's day.[8]

In short, Chaucer's familiarity with this one book is the leading literary fact in his literary preparation. As

[7] Cp. Bacon, *Essays*, "Of Vicissitude of Things."

[8] Cf. "Knight's Tale," 2136-2141:

> "That same prince and that moevere," quod he,
> "Hath stablissed, in this wrecched world adoun,
> Certeyne dayes and duracioun
> To al that is engendred in this place,
> Over the whiche day they may nat pace,
> Al mowe they yet tho dayes wel abregge."

years passed, many of Jean de Meun's authorities became his also, but it is a comparatively minor matter that Chaucer translated Boethius—a favourite author with Jean de Meun—or read in Ovid for his "Legend of Good Women." The essential matter is that the direction of his reading and the habit of his taste were determined thus early. All the machinery of mediaeval poetry—the May morning, the walled garden, the allegorical figures, the idealisation of love, his whole apparatus as a Court poet was presented to him. There is too, in the latter portion of "The Romance of the Rose," realism, constant contact with life, and constant observation, that though much more sprightly and less deep than Chaucer's, is exceedingly alert. What Chaucer added, his own tone, his own manner of observing, his peculiar tenderness—these being himself could be learned from no book.

. . . . . .

About Chaucer's life we find a great deal in the ordinary books, and we should naturally know a great deal if only the foundations of our knowledge were trustworthy. As it is, whose son he was, or even when he was born, must remain matters of probable conjecture. A Geoffrey Chaucer, whether he was the poet or not we don't know, released his interest in the house of his father John Chaucer to Henry Herbury, vintner, by a deed dated June 19, 1380. The releaser there describes himself as "Me Galfridum Chaucer, filium Johannis Chaucer Vinetarii Londonie." Again, a Geoffrey Chaucer is in the service of the Court, and

to him we have very frequent references. The matter of the poems makes it easy for us to believe that this Court Chaucer and the poet were one. The doubt is whether this poet and Court servant was the son of John Chaucer, the vintner. It is not improbable. John Chaucer, the vintner, cannot have been a poor man. He came of a family of vintners, and the question of whom he married was one of sufficient importance for his relatives to have a lawsuit about it, when he was still a boy. Besides, there are suggestions of possible connection. For example, in 1391 our poet and Court servant is appointed joint forester of North Petherton. Now, John Chaucer was a half-brother of one Thomas Heyroun, and one John Heyroun, who died in 1327, had been married to Emma, the daughter of William de Placetis, who had been forester of North Petherton up to 1274. Or, to put it more shortly, our Geoffrey Chaucer became forester of North Petherton, and if our Geoffrey Chaucer was the son of John Chaucer, he was connected with Heyrouns, one of whom had been connected with the forestership. Again, in 1338 we have the name of one John Chaucer as attendant on the king in an expedition to Flanders, evidence, if he was the right John Chaucer, of some Court connection on Chaucer's father's part. We may reasonably suppose that the poet was a son of this John Chaucer, a member of a well connected family of vintners who probably came from East Anglia, and who certainly had some connection there.

The question of the exact date of birth must equally be left open. It is the more provoking as we can fix that of the reputed father almost to a year. In the suit about the attempted marriage of the boy, a suit which began in 1326, one party contended that on December 3, 1324, the date of his abduction, John Chaucer was "under age, viz. under the age of fourteen years." Without disputing this statement, which makes him born in 1311 or later, the other party, founding on the custom of Ipswich, contended that John Chaucer was twelve before the issue of the writ. Supposing the writ to have been issued some time in 1325, John Chaucer was born in 1313 or earlier. From a further suit arising from this one we learn that John Chaucer was unmarried in 1328.

The date of Geoffrey Chaucer's birth is much less positively ascertainable. In 1386 the poet and Court servant gave evidence as to the bearing of arms by Sir Richard Scrope. At that date Geoffrey Chaucer was said to be XL ans et plus, a statement which, taken literally, means he was not fifty, or, in other words, that he was born in 1337 or later. In the same case it is stated that he had been "armeez par XXVII ans," which dates back to the time of his first campaign in France, when he was taken prisoner, 1359-1360. At this date we should suppose him to have been young, and a birth date nearer 1345 than 1337 would not be inconsistent. Yet 1345 itself makes him only fourteen at the time of his military service, and we know that clothes were bought for him as a

member of the Countess of Ulster's household in 1357, when he can hardly have been less than thirteen. The main reasons for believing Chaucer to have been born no earlier than the latest alternative date are of course afforded by his writings. There is a marked tone of youth in the "Book of the Duchesse," which we know was not written before 1369; while the most mature tales in the Canterbury collection, the last considerable work of the poet, are the production of a fully mature but not of an aged writer. We may say then that Chaucer the poet and Court servant was probably the son of John Chaucer, a well-to-do vintner with Court connection, and was born before, but not much before, 1345. One objection doubtless there is, that this would make his reputed father[9] rather old, at least thirty, at

[9] We can of course dispose of this objection by discarding the reputed father, and there is one piece of evidence on the age question which, as far as it goes, encourages one to do this. It appears that John Chaucer had a wife named Agnes, a kinswoman of Hamo de Copton. John Chaucer was alive in 1366. In 1367 Agnes, widow of John Chaucer, is the wife of Bartholomew atte Chapel.

Supposing her to have been the only wife of John Chaucer and Geoffrey to have been John's son, if we take the date of Geoffrey's birth to be 1340 and his mother then only seventeen, she was forty-four at the time of her second marriage, too late for probability in an age when Jean de Meun said that a man flourishes till thirty or forty, "after which he does nothing but languish." Clearly if she was Geoffrey's mother, Geoffrey could not have been born much before 1344. But even these supposed facts are awkward, for a re-marriage even at forty was very late. On the whole this evidence goes mainly to show that she was not Chaucer's mother, and therefore either that John Chaucer married twice, which we don't know, or that John Chaucer was not Chaucer's father.

the time of his son's birth, and we know that his relatives had been trying to marry John Chaucer when he was not fourteen.

On Chaucer's social position some light is thrown by the vexed question of the paternity of Thomas Chaucer. Of Chaucer's offspring we know positively only this that he had one son Lewis, for whom he wrote the treatise on the Astrolabe.

Thomas Chaucer became Speaker of the House of Commons in 1414; he was a man of much influence, his descendants married into the Royal House, and one of them, the Earl of Lincoln, might have ascended the English throne but for the battle of Bosworth Field, which destroped the hopes of the Yorkists. Thomas Gascoigne, Chancellor of Oxford, who died in 1458, speaking of Chaucer's repentance for what was not convenable in his writings, states that Chaucer was the father of this Thomas. That it may have been so cannot be disputed; to prove that it actually was so there are only two confirmatory pieces of evidence, and those would be amply satisfied by supposing Thomas to have been in some way connected with the poet. Moreover, there is one piece of evidence which goes to negative the larger assumption. Chaucer was very poor in his old age, and Thomas became an immensely wealthy man by his marriage with an heiress. The father of this heiress died in 1391, when she was twelve. We do not know when Thomas Chaucer married her, but, most likely in that age, it was before she was twenty, and had his son been so

circumstanced, Chaucer could hardly have been found applying personally to the Exchequer for 6s. 8d. in 1398. However, this is one of the traditions which, if they do not prove themselves, prove something: in this case that Chaucer himself was known, or believed, to be a man of good connection. Personally I do not accept all the inferences that have been drawn. The arms of Roet are found on the tomb of Thomas Chaucer. It has been assumed therefore that the mother of Thomas was a Roet, and since the poet's wife was named Philippa, that Chaucer's wife was Philippa Roet. From this to establish her as a sister of Katharine de Roet, who became the wife of John of Gaunt, is no great effort for fanciful biography. Yet, had Chaucer been the brother-in-law of John of Gaunt, it is difficult to believe he would have been allowed at any time in his career to come near to destitution.

Putting these conjectures aside, it remains to state that we do not know who Philippa Chaucer was. She may have been a cousin, second-cousin, or namesake, for a Court pension is granted one Philippa Chaucer before we have positive evidence that Chaucer was married. Yet clearly at that time this Philippa *may* have been Chaucer's wife, in which case her maiden surname is undiscoverable.

All this jumble of evidence, from which conclusions much too precise have been drawn, goes to show, in reality, no more than what we might expect. Chaucer, who came of gentle people on the edge of Court life,

was himself much favoured at Court, proceeding to be one of the King's Esquires. He was given various small employments, one important one in the Customs House, he was paid different sums of money at various times by gift or pension, he saw actual service in France, and he was sent on seven diplomatic missions —some of more importance than the rest—to France, Flanders, and Italy. On one occasion he was associated with the subsequent Earl of Worcester; on another with the subsequent Earl of Huntingdon to negotiate for the King's marriage with the daughter of the French King. At one time he sat in Parliament for the County of Kent, at another he is Clerk of the King's Works at Westminster. At times in his life he is very comfortably circumstanced, but his lot varied with Court happenings, and especially with the fortunes of his patron, John of Gaunt. From 1387 to 1389 he was poor, and again from 1393 to 1399. For some years he held on lease from the City of London one of the Gatehouses—Aldgate.

We need to know no more. To write Chaucer's poems it was necessary to have a varied experience, and as "Courtier, soldier, diplomatist, and man of business,"[10] Chaucer had seen the world. The poems themselves are eloquent of the class and standing of their author. Clearly they were not written by a prince or by one of the princely caste—the human connection is too tough and constant. Clearly, also, they were not written by a peasant or even by a bourgeois. Apart

[10] Pollard, "Primer of Chaucer."

from the Court poems, obviously the work of a courtier, the observation of common life is not observation from a standpoint of equality. There is none of Burns's work in the "Canterbury Tales." All that watching of Millers, Reeves, Shipmen, Carpenters, Summoners is done by someone clear of that medley. It is interested observation from above.

The political tone too is that of a gentleman. Chaucer shares John of Gaunt's sympathy with Lollardism, and he is not shocked with the liberalism of Jean de Meun's theology, but he burns with no persecuted ardours. It is surprising the absence of discomfort from his poems. One hears no groans, there is no crying. From winter and its hardships he turns away with a sigh of relief only that it is over, or to think of the cheerful hearth within. Altogether an attitude not unlike Scott's, with less of ardour for martial achievement no doubt, for Chaucer had seen some of the horrors of war and is silent about them, except for one translated passage in "The Knight's Tale," where he sets them down with hard mouth.

About gentility and gentle birth he speaks exactly as a man would speak who had mixed with princes and seen the world, but who felt that if it were a mere question of lineage, he himself was lesser than many a water-fly. The tone is right.

> Loke who that is most vertuous alway
> Privee and apert, and moost entendeth ay
> To do the gentil dedes that he can
> And tak him for the grettest gentil man.

How much easier than the insistence of Spenser, so anxious to be accounted noble and so ready to exalt the great! But Chaucer has no thesis: he speaks for no class—not even, like the popular Shakespeare, for all classes. He watches, coming from the gentlefolk,

> This wyde world which that men seye is round

and so he leaves it, being no more anxious about that or anything else, than a gentlewoman of Mrs. Gaskell's, looking out pleasantly and unfearingly on a world, his own place in which was not doubtful.

CHAPTER II

CHAUCER

ALTERNATELY, says M. Taine of Chaucer, "he is an observer and a trouvère." This is true, and yet one part of the alternation, speaking roughly, comes first. Chaucer learnt his trade as a courtly "maker," a paraphrasist. There was much joinering at love-complaints: it was a matter of course that he should have translated "Le Roman de la Rose" and compiled stories which were encomiums on high-born and marriageable or lately buried dames.

How much of this prentice work there was we do not know. Certainly we have lost some unripe fruit, though, as it was not produced with ease or carelessly, probably, beyond actual translations, not a very great deal. In any case it had long ceased to be prentice work before he had finished "Troilus and Cressida." Some of the least prentice work he did is in the Prologue to "The Legend of Good Women." This trouvère side of Chaucer, then, with which he begins, turns out to run nearly through his life, and is not finally abandoned till he is occupied with the later "Canterbury Tales." It is killed by the full maturity of the poet of observation, but only by that.

The other side of him, the observation side, does not take long to come into being, but it takes long to come to maturity. For a long time the Chaucer the world has come to know is in Chaucer's writings by what looks like accident. It is not really by accident, for observation was the main current of the nature, but the pen was occupied with something else. Chaucer takes long to find his subject, and, if he does not take long to find himself, he is, to the modern reader, tediously slow to pursue that grand discovery.

A rough order has been established for Chaucer's poems, but at the best the order is rough, for, if the taste of the thing were not conclusive, we have positive evidence that he remade and retouched. In the Prologue to "The Legend of Good Women" he refers doubtless to previous works. But which of them in the editions that have come down to us is in the original form? The Prologue itself must be later than some versions of the poems it mentions, but many of the actual stories that follow the Prologue are essentially young man's work. The "Parlement of Foules" is a great landmark, as the allegory fits a royal betrothal of 1381. That there were no other courtly and earlier weddings it might have fitted is a negative difficult to prove; and, if the particular wedding be accepted, what is to show the reference was not a late insertion, and the other parts of the poem, which indeed are largely of the stock of mediaeval fancy, not merely a resetting? The third book of "The Hous of Fame" sounds elderly. It is a good poem by a mature man

anxious to be serious, but its subject is the common exercise for young imagination, and the first book looks like nothing so much as one's desk drawer lifted in. This is not said to cavil at the labours of textual criticism, which in Chaucer have found their most fruitful field. But perfect accuracy in tracing the development of the poet of observation is not attainable.

It is common to begin with Chaucer's "A. B. C.," a painstaking paraphrase, almost a translation, of which the first verse is the best. The "Compleynte unto Pite" is stiff with the kind of formal attitude and phrasing a courtly amorist would love. His lady is cold to him, will not take pity on him, for indeed pity is dead in her heart. Round the bier of Pity, in his lady's heart still, according to the allegory which is pressed, stand the other qualities of the young beauty—

> Aboute hir herse ther stoden lustily,
> Withouten any wo, as thoughte me,
> Bountee parfit, wel armed and richely,
> And fresshe Beautee, Lust, and Jolitee,
> Assured Maner, Youthe, and Honestee.

In these verses the girl, healthy as morning and strong with the confidence both of high birth [1] and juvenility, looks out frankly from the laboured page.

"The Book of The Duchesse" refers to the same unrequited passion, real or imagined. It is easy to

[1] Wisdom, Estaat, Dreed, and Governaunce,
Confedred bothe by bonde and alliaunce,
attributes belonging to a princess.

suppose a basis of reality, made more serious for the purpose of effective writing. The ostensible purpose is the celebration of the virtues of the dead Blanche of Lancaster. That princess had died when twenty-nine, John of Gaunt being then of the same age and Chaucer himself not older. There was an opening for the praise perhaps of Chaucer's own lady, perhaps only of his ideal mate; and this may account for a freshness that relieves its length. It reads the youngest as well as the most immature of Chaucer's writings, possibly because it was at that time, though borrowed, the least borrowed of any. There is a winding deliberateness about the opening, as if the writer had long to live.

Chaucer is complaining he can't sleep. If you ask him why:

> I holdë hit be a siknesse
> That I have suffred this eight yere.

What kind of sickness? Ah! he doesn't tell us that:

> For ther is phisicien but oon,
> That may me hele; but that is doon.

So in quest of sleep he takes to reading Ovid, where he finds the story of "Ceyx and Alcyone," and this story of a drowned husband and a lamenting widow he proceeds to tell. In the retelling there is nothing remarkable further than that the description of the surroundings of the Cave of Morpheus, bleak and still, furnished Spenser with a hint for excellence.[2]

[2] Cp. "Faerie Queene," Book I., Canto I., Stanza 41:

> A trickling streame from high rock tumbling downe,
> And everdrizling raine upon the loft, etc.

This Tale retold, Chaucer, acting on a suggestion it affords, himself offers Morpheus a reward for slumber.

The result is success at length, and Chaucer dreams he is in his bed on a May morning, with the sound of birds coming through the painted windows of his room. He hears a horn blow, knows that the hunt is up, and is soon out of bed and following. After a time a whelp comes to him, and trying to catch it, he is tempted on into the flowery land—

> And I him folwed, and hit forth wente
> Doun by a floury grene wente
> Ful thikke of gras, ful softe and swete,
> With floures fele, faire under fete,
> And litel used, hit seemed thus;
> For bothe Flora and Zephirus,
> They two that make floures growe,
> Had mad hir dwelling ther, I trowe;
> For hit was, on to beholde,
> As thogh the erthe envye wolde
> To be gayer than the heven,
> To have mo floures, swiche seven
> As in the welken sterres be.[3]

At length he comes across a man in black, the subject widower of the poem, sitting with his back to an oak and telling aloud his loss:

> Allas, [o] deeth! what ayleth thee,
> That thou noldest have taken me,
> Whan that thou toke my lady swete?
> That was so fayr, so fresh, so free.

[3] Cp. Wordsworth: "I wandered lonely as a cloud."

> Continuous as the stars that shine
> And twinkle on the milky way.

Chaucer goes up to him and, rather foolishly (for plainly he had heard), asks him what aileth him. The Knight replies: he had loved a beautiful woman, and, after winning her, had had to suffer the sorrow of her death. All this takes long. It opens with a complaint of Fortune, three hundred lines that might be cut out wholesale.

The actual description of the lady is wordy too, but it fulfils its purpose. The effect of the gentle, meandering talk about the virtues, physical and moral, of the dead Blanche is to show her in the upshot as eminently desirable. There is something here of Chaucer's opening eye, some thought of Nature's pattern. More individually, the blood ran lively and she would

> daunce so comlily,
> Carole and singe so swetely,
> Laughe and pleye so womanly,

that John of Gaunt had been blissful in his treasure. In stiller moments her face, "sad,[4] simple and benigne," would speak eloquently of a protecting dignity:

> Therwith she loved so wel right,
> She wrong do wolde to no wight;
> No wight might do hir no shame,
> She loved so wel hir owne name.[5]

Near the end there is a description of married bliss,

[4] Sad here does not mean sad, but grave, sober. Cp. "Clerk's Tale":

> O stormy peple! unsad and ever untrewe!

[5] Cf. Hazlitt. A gentleman is one who understands and shows every mark of deference to the claims of self-love in others, *and exacts it in return from them.*

a male idea of domestic happiness, but in its quiet charm beautiful. At its close there is another of Chaucer's interruptions.

> "Sir," quod I, "wher is she now?"
> "Now!" quod he, and stinte anoon,
> Therewith he wex as deed as stoon.

It can be seldom that so idle an interrogatory leads to so real a morsel of drama.

Of "The Compleynt of Mars," a short poem which is supposed also to contain a Court allegory, there is less to say. The allegory is not now obvious, but without some allegorical purpose it was purposeless. There is very little of the loves of Venus and Mars, more of astrology, and still more of a complaint uttered by Mars after the catastrophe. This complaint is not lively. I find one line in the whole composition I remember:

> The glade night is worth an hevy morow!

Let us suppose the rest was an adaptation.[6]

[6] In the old editions a short poem, "The Compleynt of Venus" (now placed by scholars quite late), is appended to "The Compleynt of Mars." There is one stanza of the disease of love, the concluding line of which forms a perfect example of what is known as Chaucer's simplicity:

> Now certes, Love, hit is right covenable
> That men ful dere bye thy noble thing,
> As wake a-bedde, and fasten at the table,
> Weping to laughe, and singe in compleyning,
> And doun to caste visage and loking.
> Often to chaungen hewe and contenaunce,
> Pleyne in sleping, and dremen at the daunce,
> Al the revers of any glad feling.

"A Compleint to his Lady" is also a poem of little interest, a tame thing. Chaucer is in despair: his lady will not take pity on him: there is nothing for him but death:

> This same thoght me lasteth til the morwe,
> And from the morwe forth til hit be eve;

But the ear is not caught again.

Some praise has been spent on "The Compleynt of feire Anelida and fals Arcite," a careful but made up piece which begins with Theseus and leaves him; which proceeds to tell of how Arcite loved Anelida and left her; and of how Anelida made complaint—an exercise, and as an exercise not unsuccessful, in "Ariadne's passioning." There is very little poetry as there is very little narrative. Polyhymnia at the opening is spoken of as

> (Singing) with vois memorial in the shade
> Under the laurer which that may not fade.

The whole verse is imitated from Boccaccio, but the undyingness of the crown of glory is Chaucer's own. It is said of Emelye or of Hippolyta (grammatically it is said of Hippolyta)

> That al the ground about hir char she spradde
> With brightnesse of the beautee in hir face,

A more characteristic touch is the description of Anelida:

> Yong was this quene, of twenty yeer of elde,
> Of midel stature, and of swich fairnesse,
> That nature had a joye hir to behelde;
> And for to speken of hir stedfastnesse,
> She passed hath Penelope and Lucresse,
> And shortly, if she shal be comprehended,
> In hir ne mighte no-thing been amended.

But that concluding couplet of bland perfunctoriness is not a practiser's.

We must suppose then, from those preludings, that Chaucer had been practising in the twenties, had begun, when he was nearing thirty, turning out Court poems, and had continued turning them out till he was forty years or more. The striking thing about these "early" Court poems is the absence of immaturity. What immaturity there is is merely that Chaucer has not yet full control of his material,[7] metrical or narrative. But the tone, except in "The Book of the Duchesse," is not young.

A fresher feeling is to be found in the four "Canterbury Tales," which, for various reasons, we may suppose to have been drafted while he was still learning his trade, a fresher feeling and much more feeling of immaturity and youth. One of these is an ample versification of Voragine's "Life of St. Cecilia," a piece of hagiology that Chaucer, by a naïve literalness, makes readable and eminently pleasing. In this strange tale of mediaeval chastity Cecilia, to avoid a consummated marriage, tells her husband she has an angel as her lover. This angel, the husband desiring ocular proof, in due time appears, bringing with him as confirmatory evidence roses and lilies from Paradise. The husband is converted, and similarly afterwards his

[7] Perhaps one should say of his very difficult metrical material, for what is chiefly admired about these "early" poems is the difficulty and variety of the metrical schemes, but this itself is evidence of experimenting.

brother. Later all three suffer the pains of martyrdom. There is no sign that Chaucer believed this story, and he has not added much to his original, but he believed what the story was about. The idea of incorruptibility took his fancy, as it has often taken the fancy of the worldly wise. The difference is that he has caught the rare atmosphere. When the angel hands the two crowns of flowers to the maid and her unwedded husband, he is made to say:

> "With body clene and with unwemmed thoght
> Kepeth ay wel thise corones," quod he;
> "Fro Paradys to yow have I hem broght,
> Ne never-mo ne shal they roten be,
> Ne lese her sote savour, trusteth me;

And there is a touch of Chaucer, not in Voragine, showing the proud contempt of the martyr:

> Almache answerde, "chees oon of thise two,
> Do sacrifyce, or Christendom reneye,
> That thou mowe now escapen by that weye."
> At which the holy blisful fayre mayde
> Gan for to laughe, and to the juge seyde,

I do not say that this is in nature, but it is one of those strokes beyond nature that illustrate nature and are called poetry.

In his re-telling of the "Tale of Constance" Chaucer makes as docile a surrender to the spirit of his tale. It is much longer, and too long, but if it is really a very "early" writing, and it looks that way, Chaucer was very soon a master of narrative. The mediaeval virtue illustrated is that of being buffetable, or rather that of being able to survive buffeting. In other hands

the series of similar adventures would be dull beyond the power of words. There is an atmosphere of invented legend, and of course the whole is two-thirds a translation. But this poor story, with its recurring incredibilities, is told in a childlike easy fashion, and in verse that moves smoothly, even melodiously. The picture of Constance leaves an effect upon the mind, though exactly how the effect is produced it would be difficult to say. The explanation that offers itself is that there are frequent glimpses of reality, as, for instance, in the description of the youth of Constance:

> In hir is heigh beautee with-oute pryde,
> Yowthe, with-oute grenehede or folye;

or in some of the inserted comments, very impish, and, I should suppose, very late insertions, or in Hazlitt's famous quotation,[8] or in the prayer of Constance when set adrift in a boat, true to the gentle feeling of the character:

> Victorious tree, protecciouu of trewe,
> That only worthy were for to bere
> The king of heven with his woundes newe,
> The whyte lamb, that hurt was with the spere,
> Flemer of feendes out of him and here
> On which thy limes feithfully extenden,
> Me keep, and yif me might my lyf t'amenden.

---

[8] Have ye nat seyn some tyme a pale face,
Among a prees, of him that hath be lad
Toward his deeth, wher-as him gat no grace,
And swich a colour in his face hath had,
Men mighte knowe his face, that was bistad,
Amonges alle the faces in that route:
So stant Custance, and loketh hir aboute.

"He speaks," says Hazlitt, "of what he wishes to describe with

Besides there is a passage of a gentle piteousness where Constance is put to sea for the second time with her child, which is very obviously by the poet of the Griselda story.

The Griselda story, in itself a pure piece of mediaevalism, is supposed also to be one of the earliest of the Canterbury collection, but here Chaucer surmounts, with an ease that shows his mediaeval pre-eminence, the difficulties of the tale. Here indeed we have one of those stories, to modern ears grotesque, that illustrate the mediaeval habit of poetical emphasis. In part, the habit is understandable. I mean, if one wants to show a man has charity, it is easy to suppose St. Martin dividing his cloak. That is merely to show a virtue at the summit of itself. But often the story-teller wished to do more than this, he wished to show the virtue as standing out from others, and for this purpose the practice was to sacrifice the others at its shrine. Thus a knight is so fond to do honour to his lady that, having nothing in his larder, he kills his faithful falcon to provide her with a meal: Brother Juniper, to satisfy a sick man's craving, cuts off the trotters from his neighbour's living pigs: a Highlander lies to conceal the whereabouts of Charles Edward, or a mother steals a loaf to succour a starving child. Such flights indeed, as the last two instances remind us, are not unknown to the most modern and

the accuracy, the discrimination of one who relates what has happened to himself or has had the best information from those who have been eye-witnesses of it."

sensible imagination; only, when the imagination is modern, either the fault committed seems small compared with the necessity, or the virtue neglected is less important than the virtue emphasised. By this license the quality of sexual love, since essential to our being, is still allowed in modern fiction to override surprising obstacles, and on the same understanding the meaning of the mediaeval stories of Launcelot and Tristram can still be faintly discerned. It is not so, however, where the quaint imagination sacrifices the greater virtue to the less, where Amile, to succour Amis, supplies him with a bath of his children's blood, or where Griselda, to prove herself the perfect spouse, postpones her duty as a mother to her tameness as a wife. And if to-day we console the moralist within us by saying that in such instances the emphasis is misplaced, these were just the cases that especially captured the fancy of the earlier Middle Age. But even Chaucer was born too late for a full acceptance of such immoralisms, and, as he explains three times, cannot reconcile himself to Griselda's husband. It is the more wonderful that the character of Griselda herself should be one of his triumphs in sympathetic portraiture. One sees the master here and the full tide of a gentle humanity. As usual the tale is too long, and of course, for us, all out of focus, but there are passages of a moving sweetness. When the Marquis visits Griselda's cottage there are five lines for which, Mr. Pollard assures us, there is no counterpart in Chaucer's original.

And as she wolde over hir threshfold goon,
The markis cam and gan hir for to calle;
And she set doun hir water-pot anoon
Bisyde the threshfold, in an oxes stalle,
And doun up-on hir knees she gan to falle,
And with sad contenance kneleth stille
Til she had herd what was the lordes wille.

The whole burden of the peasant's uncomplaining years is carried in that pot of water. Griselda is well-looking and virtuous, not specially beautiful, doubtless the unsmiling girl with the plain, open and quiet face so often drawn by Millet. Later there are touches of a bewitching sentiment sometimes allowed to himself by that painter of serious sympathy—

Have heer agayn your litel yonge mayde,

and the one thing she says that reaches reproach—

O gode god! how gentil and how kinde
Ye semed by your speche and your visage
The day that maked was our marriage!

The passage in which the husband at length takes Griselda to his bosom may not seem very touching when separately quoted, but coming where it does, at the close of her long endurance, it always makes one's eyes a little dim. This is the art of the story-teller—to move by his story and not by passages—and already Chaucer had learnt that.

With the "Monk's Tale" we close the poems that are generally supposed to precede the completed "Troilus and Cressida." This tale, which is not a tale but a collection of tragedies, according to the current

mediaeval and simple conception of tragedy,[9] supplies some curious phrases in the course of its odd ramble. Chaucer is speaking of Zenobia:

> I seye nat that she hadde most fairnesse,
> But of hir shape she mighte nat been amended,

a gratuitous particularising of fancy bringing us as neatly in contact with the supposed fact as Defoe's visualising lies. There is a vividly contemptuous comment at the close of the account of Nero, and more striking still and more final is the grave close of the Antiochus.

> The wreche of god him smoot so cruelly
> That thurgh his body wikked wormes crepte;
> And ther-with-al he stank so horribly,
> That noon of al his meynee that him kepte,
> Whether so he wook or elles slepte,
> Ne mighte noght for stink of him endure.
> In this meschief he wayled and eek wepte,
> And knew god lord of every creature.

The account of Ugolino may be later than the rest of the "Monk's Tale," but its insistence on an invented pathos, in tone not unlike several passages in Griselda, makes it convenient to speak of it here. There is added to Dante's account the statement that the Bishop of Pisa's accusation was false. Moreover, the sons, young men and combatants, are turned into children, of whom the wonder is that they could speak at all. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings"!

[9] The simplicity of the conception consisted in thinking of Tragedy as merely a fall from a height. Nebuchadnezzar is the stock instance of such "tragedy."

It results that the barest of human tragedies is made a merely sympathetic story or, in other words, is tinified.

> right thus they to him seyde,
> And after that, with-in a day or two,
> They leyde hem in his lappe adoun and deyde.

The extreme unseverity of Chaucer's beautiful art can be appreciated once for all by anyone who cares to read the corresponding passage in Longfellow's admirable translation.[10]

"The Hous of Fame" is a poem which it is difficult to date. Chaucer's offer at the end of "Troilus" to write a comedy has been taken generally to refer to it. But few critics gratuitously would either have thought of placing it so late,[1] or even, probably, of the whole of it as all of one piece. My own belief is that Chaucer (1) drafted a poem on the subject of posthumous fame

[10] Nothing in Longfellow's own writings more indisputably proves the inner greatness of that sweet poet than those thirty lines. "Inferno," XXXIII.

[1] In the reference to his past writings in the Prologue to the "Legend of Good Women" Chaucer speaks of the "House of Fame" first. I cannot say it is improbable that he would refer to his most recent writing first ("The Tempest," which was certainly one of Shakespeare's last plays, is printed first in the Folio), but it is also not improbable that the work mentioned just before the "Book of the Duchesse" was originally an early writing. The reference (in "The Hous of Fame") to the Custom House work is taken to refer not to 1374 but to a period uninterrupted by diplomatic missions (1380-1385), when it is suggested he was closer at his desk. These speculations are ingenious, but a man would be as likely to take notice of an occupation interrupting to his studies when that interruption was new.

as a comparatively early work, an exercise, like many others, in paraphrasing Ovid, (2) that he pitchforked into this an immature essay on the "Tale of the Aeneid," and (3) that he revised the whole, some years later. On this showing, the chief remains of (1) the original would now constitute the second book, (2) would form the first book, and the evidence of (3) would chiefly be found in the third book, the work of a much older author than that of the first book, and, as I think, of a more developed poet than that of the second.

Chaucer opens by saying dreams are remarkable things, and that he too has had a remarkable dream. He dreamt he was in a temple made of glass. Where the temple was he doesn't know, but certainly it belonged to Venus:

> Hit was of Venus redely,
> The temple; for, in portreyture,
> I saw anoon-right hir figure
> Naked fletinge in a see.
> And also on hir heed, pardee,
> Hir rose-garlond whyt and reed,
> And hir comb to kembe hir heed.[2]

All round the walls there was pictured the story of the Aeneid, and this gives Chaucer the opportunity of

[2] The loosely easy writing for the rhymes sake—pardee, for see; and the comb to comb the head, for red;—speak as eloquently of an early date as the fresh vision:

> Naked fletinge in a see,

an unstudied naturalness very much in the manner of the "Book of the Duchesse." Chaucer rewrote the passage for the "Knight's Tale," where a citole replaces the comb with the obvious purpose.

telling that story very scrappily. The one pretty passage is that describing the meeting in the wood:

> And on the morwe, how that he
> And a knight, hight Achatee,
> Metten with Venus that day,
> Goinge in a queynt array,
> As she had ben an hunteresse,
> With wind blowinge upon hir tresse;

which is as pretty as it is young. On the other hand, Dido's beseeching, even if there were no comparison available with the parallel passage in the "Legend," is perfunctory. The unfaithfulness of Aeneas to Dido reminding Chaucer of others who deserted women, he supplies a rather jejune catalogue; not so much, perhaps, the catalogue of a man who had written the stories as the reference of a youth who was dreaming of writing them, or even possibly was already fiddling at the task. Not to speak of this further, I take this whole Aeneas story to be an insertion of quite early work.

When Chaucer has described the pictures, he comes out of the temple and sees an eagle hovering above. Pretty clearly he meant to begin the "Fame" poem with a statement that dreams are remarkable, that he fell asleep and dreamt that an eagle took him up into the air; but on second thoughts he determined that he could work in as the dream some old Virgilian manuscript lying by him just as he had worked in the Ovidian Ceyx and Alcyone into "The Book of the Duchesse."

In the second book, the proper beginning, the eagle seizes Chaucer. Judging from the matter—the style is not generally young—we would wish for an earlier date than one after the completed "Troilus." It is as prolix as the first book of that poem. All that happens in six hundred lines is that the eagle carries him up into the sky and deposits him outside the "Hous of Fame." The other verses are filled up with a conversation between the eagle and Chaucer rapt. The "Hous of Fame," says the eagle,[3] stands above the clouds, and there sounds enter, nothing but sounds, but all sounds, for just as if you throw a stone into water the water breaks into rings, one ring leading to a wider ring, so sound goes on breaking the air till

[3] The eagle says that Jupiter takes a special interest in the poet because of his writings about love in Cupid's service. As a reward, the poet is to be carried to Fame's house. It is in this speech of the eagle's that we have the familiar autobiographical address to Chaucer.

What strikes one as curious is that, if this is really the writing of an ageing man, the literary reference should be solely to the love poems. Besides, there are two particular points in support of dubiety on this head. There is one verse that certainly looks as if *it* at least had been written before marriage:

> And peynest thee to preyse his (Cupid's) art,
> Althogh thou haddest never part;

Also, Jupiter has no necessary connection with Cupid. Is it possible that here we have an early praise of Chaucer as a love poet by one of Cupid's messengers? If so, we must suppose that it was afterwards amplified with a reference to the Custom House employment, and that Jupiter was brought in, as more suitable both to the eagle and Chaucer's age.

the broken air reaches the Hous of Fame. It is true that at the close of this explanation Chaucer bids us

> Tak hit in ernest or in game,

but the account is very particular, as if he himself had once taken seriously this exertion of fancy:

> Now hennesforth I wol thee teche,
> How every speche, or noise, or soun,
> Through his multiplicacioun,
> Thogh hit were pyped of a mouse,
> Moot nede come to Fames House.
> I preve hit thus—tak hede now—
> By experience; for if that thou
> Throwe on water now a stoon,
> Wel wost thou, hit wol make anoon
> A litel roundel as a cercle,
> Paraventure brood as a covercle;
> And right anoon thou shalt see weel,
> That wheel wol cause another wheel,
> And that the thridde, and so forth, brother,
> Every cercle causing other,
> Wyder than himselve was;
> And thus, fro roundel to compas,
> Ech aboute other goinge,
> Caused of otheres steringe,
> And multiplying ever-mo,
> Til that hit be so fer y-go
> That hit at bothe brinkes be.

One can see how effortless and unmade up is this style of writing when one contrasts it with Pope's [4] polished

> [4] As on the smooth expanse of crystal lakes
> The sinking stone at first a circle makes;
> The trembling surface, by the motion stirred,
> Spreads in a second circle, then a third;
> Wide, and more wide, the floating rings advance,
> Fill all the watry plain, and to the margin dance;

paraphrase. There is a dividing eye. Each piece of the happening is set down just as it is seen, seriatim.

In the third book Chaucer arrives outside the Hous of Fame. As he approaches, he hears Orpheus, Glasgerion, and other harpers playing. The Lady Fame herself has myriads of eyes, ears, tongues, and, though appearing small in stature, when straightened can reach from earth to sky. There comes to her a great company of suitors, but her answers are capricious and not dictated by the merit of the appeal. For example, good deserving people ask for fame. They are refused:

> No wight shal speke of yow, y-wis,
> Good ne harm, ne that ne this.

> Thus ev'ry voice and sound, when first they break,
> On neighb'ring air a soft impression make;
> Another ambient circle then they move;
> That, in its turn, impels the next above;
> Through undulating air the sounds are sent,
> And spread o'er all the fluid element.

In those dozen lines Pope actually manages to say more than Chaucer in his two dozen, but you do not *see* the thing as it happens.

Phineas Fletcher in his "Purple Island," Canto V., Stanza 47, has endeavoured to say the same thing more shortly:

> As when a stone, troubling the quiet waters,
> Prints in the angry stream a wrinkle round,
> Which soon another and another scatters,
> Till all the lake with circles now is crown'd:
> All so the aire struck with some violence nigh,
> Begets a world of circles in the skie;
> All which infected move with sounding qualitie.

but in the shortening has lost the whole life of the passage.

Another deserving company appears, but she tells Æolus to blow for them on the trumpet of slander. Still another deserving company appears, and for them the voice is Clear Laud's. There is a fourth very deserving company who have done virtuous actions, but for the virtue's sake alone. Fame accedes to their request that their names should be forgotten. A fifth exactly similar company prefer an exactly similar request, but Fame is enraged and orders Æolus to publish their good works broadly to the world. Then come the pretenders, those who have done nothing but nevertheless wish the credit of having done much. The first company of these Fame approves; the second she dismisses truculently. At length there is a bold request: the evildoers ask for fair renown, but to this request, which Chaucer must have known is often granted, it was too much for his courage to accede. It is enough to fulfil the prayer of the foolish folk, those who have done supremely foolish things and by consequence are notorious forever. All this is to show that Fame is capricious, but it is well shown, and the narrative is powerfully succinct. The instances are numerous, but they force attention.

Chaucer is then taken to the House of Rumour. The noisy disturbance within is dramatically given, a sort of idleness or want of consecution in the description that makes the description very real. It cannot be pretended that this third book of the "Hous of Fame" is young man's work. It may be said that the story is not much and that one will forget it. But

while one reads one is attentive. The imagination is highly alert. I do not say that the poem as a whole is successful. The subject, not very interesting in itself, is barely treated, and there is too little direct meaning. That Fame is capricious we knew without journeying beyond the stars. There needed no eagle to tell us that. Unquestionably the work has been overpraised, and from its suitability for schools and colleges has done much to furnish our generation with an initial dislike of Chaucer. But it has a grip of its own dull kind at the close. Pope has written a version of the third book of this fable: he has brought it together; the instances of famous people are better selected; the companies of fame seekers are more broadly discriminated; it is less haphazard; but it has lost such vision as Chaucer's has.

I cannot reconcile myself to the belief that the construction of "The Parlement of Foules" was later than the completed "Troilus and Cressida"; the whole allegory, brought in as it is, is so desperately forced. No doubt the actual writing is generally very mature, but that is only to say that it looks as if there had been an early draft, afterwards written over by an observer both of fowls and men. The introduction is the usual mediaeval preface, the poet reading the classics and falling asleep and being conducted by Scipio or Virgil or Ovid to a fair place where there are many trees. In this garden, where one finds all the usual figures, Dame Nature is set on a hill with a formel eagle on her wrist. Three male eagles claim

the hand of the formel, but the formel, who at the first request had blushed, asks for a year to consider; and this is the allegory. The jejune construction of the fable is very much at variance with the grown up and considering tone. One is reminded by the opening of the construction of the early part of "The Book of the Duchesse," but the writing does not remind one of "The Book of the Duchesse" in the least; and whether Chaucer is saying that all our new corn comes out of old fields or that men dream of their occupations, or is furnishing us with a catalogue of birds, a mere catalogue but full of variety, one hears alike the grave signor, the voice is full and the speech is slow. The shorter catalogue of the trees is less melodious than Spenser's famous copy, but more true to a locality; the characterisation is crisper.[5] In another passage the music of the spheres is, if one may say so, beautifully imitated, a sort of mellow undertone or inner singing, part heard, an overlaid orchestra—

> Than shewed he him the litel erthe, that heer is,
> At regard of the hevenes quantite;
> And after shewed he him the nyne speres,
> And after that the melodye herde he
> That cometh of thilke speres thryes three,
> That welle is of musyke and melodye
> In this world heer, and cause of armonye.

---

[5] "Faerie Queene," Book I., Canto I. It is amusing to notice that Spenser doubts the real existence of Aleyn (Faerie Queene Mutability, c. vii.), by which token he had clearly read "The Foules Parley" of "Dan Geffrey."

More obvious is the exercise in onomatopoesis which is occupied with the farmyard noises—the "quek, quek" of the duck and the fretful cackle of the geese. Disturb them on a common, and one realises how closely Chaucer listened.[6]

Elsewhere there is a picture of which Morris became repetitively fond:

> I saw Beautee, withouten any atyr,
> And Youthe, ful of game and Iolyte,
> Fool-hardinesse, Flatery, and Desyr,
> Messagerye, and Mede, and other three—
> Hir names shul noght here be told for me—
> And upon pilers grete of jasper longe
> I saw a temple of bras y-founded stronge.
>
> Aboute the temple daunceden alway
> Wommen y-nowe, of whiche somme ther were
> Faire of hem-self, and somme of hem were gay;
> In kirtels, al disshevele, wente they there—
> That was hir office alwey, yeer by yere—
> And on the temple, of doves whyte and faire
> Saw I sittinge many a hundred paire.

All these passages are careful writing, the careful writing of a past master, by a poet who is above his material; and yet, despite this, the whole poem has been dead for hundreds of years, and is now a mere antiquity; the construction and the general conception are so weak. That birds should be represented as speaking, the Middle Ages took for a great entertainment in itself, but no management could have made

[6] There are spurts of humour, as where a little later the duck swears "by my hat," I suppose because the hat often had the image of a saint stuck on it.

the Court allegory anything but dull for us. The result to-day is a skeleton decorated with poetry, a poem of which both the interest and the appeal were temporary.

"Troilus and Cressida," on the other hand, is a world poem of which the interest is perennial. Some of the work here, in its own prolix kind, is so perfect that no one will ever beat it, and its subject, the longings and despairs of lovers, is fresh always with each new generation. With this said, let it also be boldly said that there is no other of the world's long poems not dependent on temporary reference that is so completely wearisome. There are many episodic causes contributory to this, but the recurrent cause is that the subject is too little varied—

> For though the beste harpour upon lyve
> Wold on the beste souned joly harpe
> That ever was, with alle his fingres fyve,
> Touche ay o streng, or ay o werbul harpe,
> . . . . . .
> It shulde maken every wight to dulle,

and it does make one dull to toil through a poem nearly as long as "Paradise Lost" and twice as unreadable. There are poor stretches in "Paradise Lost"; there are rich stretches in "Troilus." One can put it in that way. In "Paradise Lost" one is vexed by occasional longueurs, in "Troilus" one is rewarded by occasional pleasure. This is to speak of the effects taken singly; but let the long tedious thing be read right through, and one sees that there is another effect,

the effect of the whole, which is in fact, though got by tediousness and prolixity, the effect of life.

The story is shortly this. The soothsayer Calchas, foreseeing the doom of Troy, deserts to the Greeks. He leaves behind in Troy his lovely daughter, a widow, with whom Prince Troilus, having seen her in a temple, falls in love. But how to approach! After consulting his friend Pandarus, in Boccaccio's version the cousin of Cressida, in Chaucer's her uncle, an introduction not unnatural but by no means necessary to the legend, there is the long to-ing and fro-ing of the courtship. The critical incident is that in a Trojan sortie Antenor is made prisoner by the Greeks. Calchas, who longs for his daughter, persuades the Greeks, who are beholden to him, to exchange Antenor for Cressida, and to this the Trojans agree. Troilus and Cressida are in despair. They love in secret, so that their love cannot be offered as a reason for refusing the exchange. At length it is arranged between them that Cressida should submit, but should find some way by persuasion or by stealth to return within ten days. Troilus waits for her on the walls, but time passes and no Cressida. Partly, it was not easy to come, partly, Diomed being kind to her, she is contented to stay with him. Thus Shakespeare says "As false as Cressid."

Why this story interested the Middle Ages so much I do not know. The intellect in those years was romantic. It preferred, as children do to-day, to add stories of its own invention to the bold original; and

this is one of the late romances that grew out of the tale of Troy. One can trace the same habit of mind in the Odyssey itself, in the tale of Brut, and in Fenelon's Telemachus. Certainly the story of Troilus and Cressida brings one into friendly, homely contact with the heroes of one's imagination.

As Chaucer tells the story the modern simple reader does not quite understand. It is not as if there were the least suggestion of a real discrepancy in position, or of condescension on the part of Troilus. There seems to us no obstacle to the marriage of the lovers, and yet Pandarus is to be taken as a character (and very obviously) on the bad side. Are we to suppose that Troilus, being a prince, marriage was a solution that was always outside the story-teller's vision? Even so, he could still be the devoted knight of Cressida, and though their love was secret, and indeed it was a first point of chivalry to preserve its secrecy, it was not, in itself, and apart from its publication, by any of the laws of the Mediaeval Courts of Love accounted dishonourable. Wherefore then is the friend of Troilus mediaevally at fault? The chief fault that to the mediaeval amorist the friend of Troilus could commit was the last he thinks of committing—the betrayal of his friends' confidence. It must be evident that Chaucer reviews the whole situation from the standpoint of Christian marriage. There is one immediate result. A story, in its original, suited to celebrate the amorous virtue mainly inculcated by mediaeval amorists—faithfulness in love, and of whose

connection or disconnection [7] with marriage the old legend of Achilles's slave and Hector's brother was not thinking, becomes at once in Chaucer's hands uncomfortable. One asks why Chaucer has so arranged it. The answer perhaps is that he is not here re-telling a mythical legend, such as he might have found in Ovid and used as the basis for one of his stories of Good Women. He is using, and in large part translating, the version of the story already made by Boccaccio, a version in which the story was already, though episodically, in some degree related to real life.

We must, I think, in this connection take account of three facts—the first, that Chaucer, with the vein of realism now deeply developed in him, was not at all tempted to dispense with such contrasting reference to existing morality as Boccaccio's version supplied: the second, that Boccaccio's version, which, though mainly merely amorous, on occasion admits a knowledge of the moral laws ignored, did probably really shock him: and the third, that had Chaucer not been shocked he would not probably have been as interested as he was.[8] The invention of Chaucer's Pandarus is

[7] Nevertheless the disconnection is of course essential to the story—for if Troilus and Cressida had been married no obstacle would have arisen to faithfulness, any more than if Iseult had been free to marry Tristan.

[8] This is the one sense in which we may say that Chaucer "couldn't help" seeing the story as he did. We must always remember that Chaucer's habit of mind was conventional, at once conventional and interested in the breach of convention—a by no means unusual combination.

his own great achievement, and with this invention we have at once, and omnipresent, the atmosphere of the illicit, an atmosphere which is Richardsonian. Let us admit that this atmosphere was not unwelcome to Chaucer, but let us also admit, before we come to praise what he has achieved, that it is an atmosphere incompatible with the freest and noblest art. Chaucer's "Troilus" is not one of the beautiful stories of the world. It is a great story, and it contains "beauteous things," but it is not singly beautiful. Tennyson spoils the old story of Launcelot because he is too delicate, delicate with the delicacy of a later age; Chaucer was unfit to tell anew and quite freshly the old story of Cressida's unfaithfulness and Troilus's faith, for however substantially right his moral judgment always was, it was never innocent. Yet the story with Pandarus in it, certainly with Chaucer's Pandarus, is more true to life than the bravura legends of the Middle Age to which morality is so little related that they cannot possibly be translated into worthy conduct? Most certainly: Chaucer's version *is* more true to life as it is lived, but it is not about what is noble, or what of noble it is about survives only when Chaucer forgets he is telling a story of intrigue and slips back into telling a story of devotion. There is a distinction between a novelist's point of view, between a conception natural to fiction and a conception that is poetical. No doubt there is from one standpoint what is artistically a gain, for quite apart from the value of Pandarus as a character study (as living a thing as even Chaucer

has done), the oldened and worsened third party supplies an admirable prose and comic foil to the poetry of love, but this dramatic relief is dearly purchased. The original legend of Troilus and Cressida, whenever it took its origin, most obviously spoke about the same thing as the original legend of Tristan and Iseult, and, working in its own way and by reprehension of the opposite, praised the same thing—constancy. The added machinery of the third party was mainly added machinery, and though in Boccaccio, perhaps its inventor, it introduced, and was intended to introduce, a tone of license, it need not have been so treated, and in Boccaccio was not so treated as to alter the entire balance of the story. When, however, this third party is throughout viewed as continuously and consciously engaged in the wrongful, it is so no longer. We find ourselves of necessity and permanently in contemplation of the mean. With such a character as Chaucer's Pandarus it is not possible for anyone to re-tell the story of Troilus's devotion so as to leave an impression generally noble. Shakespeare himself cannot do it. Shakespeare, who can tell the story of Cymbeline so as to leave us with sweet feelings, merely disturbs us with his intrigue in his Troilus; so unpleasant in the affairs of the heart is the intrusion of the hateful. Outside a love affair it is different. Shakespeare's Iago is a foil to the magnanimity of Othello. Shakespeare's Pandarus—a rough version, a rough and coarsened version of Chaucer's Pandarus, but still a version—Shakespeare's Pandar soils everything.

The first book of Chaucer's poem is by far the most tedious; the poet taking so long to get into his stride that one is tempted to think the opening was planned, perhaps roughly written out, before the rest. Indeed there are few poems that look so little as if they had been written at one time. All through the five books there are longueurs, and all through there are parts that show no craftsmanship in telling a story, side by side with parts that show the summit of craftsmanship in this.

The first book tells of the first seeing of Cressida by Troilus and of the effect of love-hunger upon him. Having seen her he cannot get her image out of his mind—sick at heart for fear his love may not prosper,

> And whan that he in chaumbre was allone,
> He doun up-on his beddes feet him sette.

This is all in true mediaeval style, as is also the coming of the bosom friend. But Troilus will not tell what ails him, at least he will not give the name of his lady. Pandarus says a man in trouble without trust is beyond hope. A friend may not be clever and yet his advice may be of service—

> A whetston is no kerving instrument,
> And yet it maketh sharpe kerving-tolis:

The blind man needs a leader. This single speech with this one illustrated sentiment extends to a hundred lines.

Judged by any poetical standard, the book as a whole is a failure, so slow, so broken spoken, so cumbersome, so toilsome and lengthy, most readers can get no further.

Of passages there is the description of Troilus's attention fastening on her,

> And sodeynly he wex ther-with astoned,
> And gan hire bet biholde in thrifty wyse:
> "O mercy, god!" thoughte he, "wher hastow woned,
> That art so fair and goodly to devyse?"

In the long conversations with Pandarus, or rather in the long monologues of Pandarus, Troilus can find no comfort. Words of cheer are easily spoken, wise saws and ancient instances. But Troilus must be left to weep alone—

> Nor other cure canstow noon for me.
> Eek I nil not be cured, I wol deye;
> What knowe I of the quene Niobe?
> Lat be thyne olde ensaumples, I thee preye.

At last Pandarus extracts the name.

It will all come right says the wise man. Troilus has wept and sorrowed enough, now gladness will follow. All things alternate, sun and shower—

> For thilke ground, that bereth the wedes wikke,
> Bereth eek thise holsom herbes, as ful ofte
> Next the foule netle, rough and thikke,
> The rose waxeth swote and smothe and softe;

Pandarus is to tell Cressida of the affection of Troilus. Here a new fear assails the anxious lover. Cressida may be wroth with his presumption.[9] At last he takes

[9] In the text I have omitted to say that, conformably with what the tale brings out, the figure of Cressida at the outset is drawn as pronouncedly feminine,

> alle hir limes so wel answeringe
> Weren to womanhode, *that creature*
> *Was never lasse mannish in seminge.*

heart of grace, and believing his affairs will prosper in the hands of his friend, gives himself up to good feelings. "Explicit Liber Primus."

After this we get into the action of the story. It is May, "that moder is of monthes glade," and Pandarus has gone to visit Cressida—

Whan he was come un-to his neces place,
"Wher is my lady?" to hir folk seyde he;
And they him tolde; and he forth in gan pace,
And fond, two othere ladyes sete and she
With-inne a paved parlour; and they three
Herden a mayden reden hem the geste
Of the Sege of Thebes, whyl hem leste.

Quod Pandarus, "ma dame, god yow see,
With al your book and al the compànye!"
"Ey, uncle myn, welcome y-wis," quod she,
And up she roos, and by the hond in hye
She took him faste, and seyde, "this night thrye,
To goode mote it turne, of yow I mette!"
And with that word she doun on bench him sette.

"Ye, nece, ye shal fare wel the bet,
If god wole, al this yeer," quod Pandarus;
"But I am sory that I have yow let
To herknen of your book ye preysen thus;
For goddes love, what seith it? tel it us.
Is it of love? O, som good ye me lere!"
"Uncle," quod she, "your maistresse is not here!"

With that they gonnen laughe, and tho she seyde,
"This romaunce is of Thebes, that we rede;"

How natural all this is!

Pandarus then excites an expectant interest by saying he knows of a good thing but will not tell her what. He takes occasion to talk of the siege and incidentally

to praise Troilus. The irritated girl at last directly questions him :

> " Now, my good eem, for goddes love, I preye,"
> Quod she, " com of, and tel me what it is ;"

and gets it from him that Troilus loves her. It is all very skilful but tedious; a copy of life, none of the foreshortening of art. At first she will not listen, but he tells her of the stuff that will not endure :

> Til at the laste, " O good eem," quod she tho,
> " For love of god, which that us bothe made,
> Tel me how first ye wisten of his wo :
> Wot noon of hit but ye? " He seyde, " no."
> " Can he wel speke of love? " quod she, " I preye,
> Tel me, for I the bet me shal purveye."
>
> Tho Pandarus a litel gan to smyle,[10]

and he proceeds to tell of how Troilus was at once pale and fresh on account of love. When he is gone, Cressida, chewing the cud of fancy, retires to her chamber, and sitting there at the window sees Troilus coming home from a victorious sortie. At a sudden burst of acclamation Troilus reddens, and as she, herself unseen, sees him so great and so human, her heart whispers to itself, and it is as if she had drunk new wine.[1]

[10] And so in the " Friar's Tale " the fiend in the wood, knowing of what is coming,

> This yeman gan a litel for to smyle.

[1] This is the passage that remained in the memory of Morris when he was thinking of Chaucer,

> whose dreamy eyes
> Beheld the flush to Cressid's cheeks arise
> When Troilus rode up the praising street.

After he has passed, Cressida begins to think more soberly, and turns the matter to and fro in a matter of fact mind. She has been married, and does not wish again to surrender herself to the governance of a man;[2] still she persuades herself she may play with love. It is true widow's talk, and, if we have not the freshness of romance, there is instead the detail of reality. At length she steps down into the garden with her young nieces. At night a nightingale sings on a tree where the girls have played. These two vignettes are beautifully harmonious, the song of love and of youth claiming its hearing from the ears of the world.

Meanwhile Pandarus is communicating to Troilus the safe receipt for most letters that are commendable, love letters or otherwise. A good deal of postmanship brings us to the arrangements for an actual meeting, though, so far, Cressida has had no thought of this. It has been for her merely the forlorn knight and his lady. But Pandarus pretends to Cressida that a lawsuit is to be revived against her, and his advice is that she should dine with a brother of Troilus who is willing to befriend her. The same false tale is used with Deiphobus, and it is arranged that a company of relations should meet at his house to join him in befriending Cressida. Troilus, in fact, suffers from love melancholy, which company may cure, and while at his brother's house he is to feign sickness. All happens as set out: Helen goes to her brother-in-law's as

[2] As in the "Romance of the Rose," cf. l. 9200, Mr. Ellis's translation.

matter of course, Cressida also to the house of a helper. It is explained that Troilus is sick of an unknown malady upstairs, and the effect on Cressida of this tribute—the man dying (so to say) for love—is subtly given.

In this second book there is much master work in detail—

> Prick'd; as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
> Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase.

The speeches where they occur are still too long, but otherwise the book does not drag. There is more story to tell, and this lets Chaucer, the born story-teller, run on freely. The effect in its way is rather wonderful, pleasantly familiar, the whole domesticities of Mediaeval Troy being brought, as it were, near to us—the first verse novel à la Richardson.

The third book where it is good has a similar excellence. The story goes on to narrate how Cressida has had an interview with Troilus feigning sick. She agrees to be his lady queen, he the knight to worship. His shame at the success of his deceit is in character with ingenuous youth:

> But lord, so he wex sodeinliche reed;

Equally in character are Pandarus's thanks to Cupid for his success. Afterwards there are further meetings, and finally Pandarus arranges for Cressida to sup at his house and, the rain coming on, the lovers, much stratagem aiding, are thrown together. Pandarus has had to invent a tale of how Troilus, knocking at the

door, is half-dead with jealousy. Cressida, knowing such suspicions to be causeless, thinks that explanations can wait till the morning. But Pandarus urges haste to save the life of the self-desperate man:

> Nece, al thing hath tyme, I dar avowe;
> For whan a chaumber a-fyr is, or an halle,
> Wel more nede is, it sodeynly rescowe
> Than to dispute, and axe amonges alle
> How is this candel in the straw y-falle?
> A! *benedicite*! for al among that fare
> The harm is doon, and fare-wel feldefare!

where the light accent of secure wickedness is very hateful. At the meeting thus fixed poor Cressida tells her lover how idle this foolish quarrel is:

> With that a fewe brighte teres newe
> Out of hir eyen fille, and thus she seyde,
> "Now god, thou wost, in thought ne dede untrewe
> To Troilus was never yet Criseyde."

the truth of which he knows too well. He is ashamed of the wretched contrivance to which he has been a party, and beside himself for Cressida's grief. There is much weeping, half explanations where the whole cannot be told, the comforting of sore hearts one against the other, a lovers' reconciliation. Afterwards, the happy lover thanks Pandarus, but Pandarus bids him not to be sure of continuance, for all continuance is in danger to end. This is the sum of world-wise wisdom, and yet it seems to me I detect something of the author here in the tone of his recollected phrase, too grave for the essentially mean meaning of what

Pandarus says, but appropriate to Chaucer's foreseen ending, suitable to the tale that was to go down in such sad fortune:

> For of fortunes sharp adversitee
> The worst kinde of infortune is this,
> A man to have ben in prosperitee,
> And it remembren, whan it passed is.

However, as yet Troilus is happy. To his friend he sings of love—

> Love, that of erthe and see hath governaunce,
> Love, that his hestes hath in hevene hye.

and his heart becomes soft and humble.

This book is notable for many speeches mercilessly long, but, for all that, this book of the meeting is strangely and sufficingly good in its realistic detail. One gets what is so rare, romance and reality at once. Such a fusion on the broadest lines is not unknown: but here, there is a fusion of intertwisted detail—the frets, alarms, the petted tears of lovers, the base underplot of the helper, the union of two hearts. As the story gets more intimate it becomes more emphatically poetry:

> Right as an aspes leef she gan to quake,
> Whan she him felte hir in his armes folde.

There is all the meanness of an intrigue, with a diapason of human law. The effect is the effect of the whole however, and there are few striking passages.

The fourth book supplies the crisis. It is proposed to exchange Antenor for Cressida. It seems to the

noble Hector improper to exchange a non-combatant for a combatent:

> "Sires, she nis no prisoner," he seyde;
> "I noot on yow who that this charge leyde,
> But, on my part, ye may eft-sone him telle,
> We usen here no wommen for to selle."

But this stroke of feeling, so much in consonance with his character in legend, is his alone. The princes think only of profit, and the bargain is struck.

Troilus in despair goes to his own house, where Pandarus follows to comfort him. "Who could have expected this," but "if Cressida is lost Cressida is not all the world": Troilus will not listen. Then Pandarus again—"Why not elope with Cressida?" But this pleases Troilus no better. It is to sacrifice her honour. Meanwhile Cressida is visited by her female companions, who are ignorant of all but the ostensible. It is sad that she should go, but good may come of it:

> But as men seen in toune, and al aboute,
> That wommen usen frendes to visyte,
> So to Criseyde of wommen com a route
> For pitous joye, and wenden hir delyte;
> And with hir tales, dere y-nough a myte,
> These wommen, whiche that in the cite dwelle,
> They sette hem doun, and seyde as I shal telle.
>
> Quod first that oon, "I am glad, trewely,
> By-cause of yow, that shal your fader see,"
> A-nother seyde, "y-wis, so nam not I;
> For al to litel hath she with us be."
> Quod tho the thridde, "I hope, y-wis, that she
> Shal bringen us the pees on every syde,
> That, whan she gooth, almighty god hir gyde!"

Tho wordes and the wommannisshe thinges,
She herde hem right as though she thennes were;
For, god it wot, hir herte on other thing is,
Although the body sat among hem there.
Hir advertence is alwey elles-where;
For Troilus ful faste hir soule soughte;
With-outen word, alwey on him she thoughte.
. . . . . .
And thilke foles sittinge hir aboute
Wenden, that she wepte and syked sore
By-cause that she sholde out of that route
Departe, and never pleye with hem more.
And they that hadde y-knowen hir of yore
Seye hir so wepe, and thoughte it kindenesse,
And eche of hem wepte eek for hir distresse;

How carefully this is painted, and how real it makes the whole menage. Such passages admit Hazlitt's general observation that, "as Chaucer never omits any material circumstances, he is prolix from the number of points on which he touches without being diffuse on any one; and is sometimes tedious from the fidelity with which he adheres to his subject, as other writers are from the frequency of their digressions from it."

When Pandarus goes to visit Cressida he finds her abandoned to her grief:

The pleye, the laughtre men was wont to finde
In hir, and eek hir Joyes everychone,
Ben fled, and thus lyth now Criseyde allone.

The busy helper is next in search of Troilus. Him he finds in a temple complaining of Necessity in a hundred unutterably dull lines, a paraphrase of Boethius or Bradwardine, of both or either. What a strange world did this poet write for, that, after so

much artistry, could relish so plain an insertion, and how strange a poet, who was doubtless as proud of this schoolmanship as of his eye for nature! There is then the meeting between the lovers, prefaced by a long made up scene, where Cressida faints and where Troilus, taking her for dead, lays her out as such. We come after this to what happened. Cressida has her own plan; she is to feign acquiescence and to go to her father for a short time. But Troilus, now at the breaking point, will not consent; she may never be able to return: it is too dangerous to part. To this Cressida replies with woman's sense. Such unthrifty ways please only at the moment.

> But afterward, ful sore it wol us rewe.

He need not be anxious about her faithfulness. She calls as witness to her words all the gods of heaven and earth and sea, Nature herself, the pure water that pursues its undeviating course:

> And thou, Simoys, that as an arwe clere
> Thorugh Troye rennest ay downward to the see,
> Ber witnesse of this word that seyd is here.

Troilus agrees at last, but even as he agrees harks back to his own plan:

> "And now, so this be sooth," quod Troilus,
> "I shal wel suffre un-to the tenthe day,
> Sin that I see that nede it moot be thus.
> But, for the love of god, if it be may,
> So lat us stele prively away;
> For ever in oon, as for to live in reste,
> Myn herte seyth that it wol been the beste."

At the break of day the lovers part:

> The day gan ryse, and Troilus him cladde,
> And rewfulliche his lady gan biholde.

If there are nearly 1700 lines in this book which had no long story to tell, and if the author is sometimes pitiless with his readers, nevertheless he gets his work done. Such was the thing that took place.

The fifth book is of another order of Art altogether; Chaucer running over Cressida's faithlessness very lightly, purposely no doubt, but too lightly for the reality of the preceding books. It looks as if romance had ceased to be realistic romance, and one had merely a synopsis of the end of the story. There is a gain in poetical art, but it is a different art. So huge a contrast in treatment was, without doubt, partly unintentional; Chaucer was getting tired. But even so, he must, in part, have consciously felt that, if he were to speak of the love-making of Cressida and Diomed in similar detail, the story would no longer have been the story of Troilus and Cressida; besides, it could not but have been largely repetition. Anyhow the result is entirely happy. The new love-making is almost wholly omitted. In fact, the fifth book deals with the effect on Troilus of Cressida's absence, and, to let us feel this, it was necessary she should be absent from us too. The music of dying day was native to Chaucer, and so Cressida is treated, with the greatest art, as the absent one.

The book opens with Troilus, full of foreboding, setting about his melancholy escort. Halfway betwixt

the Greek camp and the city the exchange is effected, and one sees the two troops of knights meeting as much before one's eyes as the evolutions in an arena, as much a possession for the pictorial imagination as Wellington and Blucher, for the memory as Andromache's farewell. At length the parting that must be is, and so :

> To Troye is come this woful Troilus
> In sorwe aboven alle sorwes smerte.

In his chamber he complains aloud of the absence of his lady ; his sleep is broken ; the owls' cry fills him with melancholy. This heaviness Pandarus persuades him to fight with company at the palace of Sarpedon, where there are feasting and jousting, music and fair ladies :

> Nor in this world ther is non instrument
> Delicious, through wind, or touche, or corde,
> As fer as any wight hath ever y-went,
> That tonge telle or herte may recorde,
> That at that feste it nas wel herd acorde ;
> Ne of ladies eek so fayr a companye
> On daunce, er tho, was never y-seyn with yë.
>
> But what avayleth this to Troilus,
> That for his sorwe no-thing of it roughte?
> For ever in oon his herte piëtous
> Ful bisily Criseyde his lady soughte.
> On hir was ever al that his herte thoughte.
> Now this, now that, so faste imagininge,
> That glade, y-wis, can him no festeyinge.
>
> These ladies eek that at this feste been,
> Sin that he saw his lady was a-weye,
> It was his sorwe upon hem for to seen,
> Or for to here on instrumentz so pleye.
> For she, that of his herte berth the keye,
> Was absent, lo, this was his fantasye,
> That no wight sholde make melodye.

The week past, he becomes fretfully anxious as he awaits in his palace the expected hour: he must revisit her house and the familiar places:

> And to the yonder hille I gan hir gyde,
> Allas! and there I took of hir my leve!

He sings love-lorn songs. Again, he would walk upon the walls longing for the tenth day to come:

> Of al this toun, save onliche in this space,
> Fele I no wind that souneth so lyk peyne;
> It seyth, "Allas! why twinned be we tweyne?"

In truth, between his leaving Sarpedon's palace and the tenth day there were at most two days, but Chaucer depicts the anxious hours in such detail that you think of him as waiting for long. It is the same when the narrative turns to Diomed and the beautiful Cressida:

> And save hir browes joyneden y-fere
> There nas no lak, in ought I can espyen.[4]

Chaucer tells of the progress of Diomed's suit in few words, but as though it occurred through long time. The effect is admirably as one would have it:

> The day is more, and lenger every night,
> Than they be wont to be, him thoughte tho.

Similarly, when Troilus, walking on the walls on the tenth day, in the passage familiar to Shakespeare, "sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents," the day itself seems interminable, and yet we are not reading

[4] A curious piece of particularisation that stuck in Chaucer's memory from some tradition of the original Briseis—"superciliis junctis" of the Latin "Dares Phrygius," c. 13 (cf. Skeat, II., lxiv.). So commentary lights up an author's habit. It is like someone with childish fidelity telling a real story.

a hundred lines. There is an evening light, and even the mocking comment of Pandarus:

> Ye, fare-wel al the snow of ferne yere!

is subdued to the tone. The day ends and she has not come, but there is still a hope; there may have been a mistake as to the day itself:

> And on the morwe un-to the yate he wente,
> And up and down, by west and eek by este,
> Up-on the walles made he many a wente.
> But al for nought.

The rest is merely the flickering of the flame. Troilus sends her a letter; it is too long, the one blemish on the artistry of the book, and she answers:

> She wolde come, ye, but she niste whanne.

Other letters pass, till at last there comes that one from Cressida signed "La Vostre C," really rather a masterpiece (the letter Troilus thought "al strange"). "Words, words, mere words, no matter from the heart"[5]—showing the cooling of love. Besides, Troilus, who has been troubled with a dream, finds by direct evidence his dream was true. He had dreamt of Cressida embracing a boar, and Cassandra interprets this for him as the token of the house of Diomed—the boar which Meleager slew. And now a part of Diomed's armour is captured by Deiphobus in a sortie, and Troilus recognises the brooch he had given Cressida pinned upon it:

> "Was ther non other broche yow liste lete
> To feffe with your newe love," quod he.

[5] Shakespeare, "Troilus and Cressida."

The hopeless man throws himself into the thickest battle, and finds the death he sought at the hands of Achilles.[6]

The modern critic speaks of this book more sympathetically than of the first four. It is at once the most poetical, in a strict sense, and the most artistic. There is one attitude governing all, and there is nothing sordid, or what there is of the sordid, and trivially so, Cressida's surrender to Diomed, is held in a dim background. In this last book we are out of the atmosphere of intrigue, and the manner of lament at once suits Chaucer's distinguishing pathos, and is universal in appeal. Criseyde "bright of hewe," the star of which poor Troilus has lost all the light, fades

[6] To this story there is appended a surprisingly inappropriate moral recommending heavenly contemplation. If the moral were genuine there was no need to write this particular story, not to speak of many of the "Canterbury Tales." Chaucer's field of observation would have been narrowed if all the "yonge fresshe folkes" had retired to a monastery. I suppose he was nervous as to the effect on his reputation of publishing a whole long poem dealing with an intrigue. But a moral sufficiently "religious" would cover all. Such a moral was the more necessary, as with the wholly bad Pandarus the implied moral of the original story had already been complicated. As Chaucer tells the tale of "Troilus and Cressida" there is no implied moral, no expressly implied moral I mean, nothing more than there is in any part of life. Of course every reader dislikes Pandarus or, rather, hates his occupation; but this was no addition to the stock morality of mankind. Indeed, to speak accurately, we hate Pandarus despite Chaucer rather than because of him. The short fact is that Chaucer has written a poem true to life, and every poem really true to life, since art helps us to visualise things, reinforces moral judgment.

like youth. One does not need to have lived to be old, nor to have been the victim of a disastrous love affair, to have longed with Troilus for the irrevocable. This book is Chaucer's "Tempest," his fifth act of the "Winter's Tale," his "Last Tournament." It is new, and quite unlike Shakespeare or Tennyson because Chaucer's pathos is quite different from theirs, more childlike and more spontaneous; less moving but more touching than even Shakespeare's; but it is not wholly new, being indeed but a lovely descant upon a familiar theme. The world-achievement is Books 2, 3, and 4, a piece of work by no means perfect, tedious uncommonly, often, and in tone so far from being high or splendid as to be generally, though not small, mean. Troilus's love—it is the nature of that generous passion —is the one unselfish reach of a character by no means fine: Cressida's is a yielding to vanity and pleasure: and the concomitants, Pandarus, and the fribble of folk going their ordinary ways, are of the web of the world; but for all this, or because of this, there is a reality which is astonishing. The preposterous patience with which the vraisemblance is preserved, the care with which the little cameos are inscribed, the artlessness as of a copyist, the familiar ease with which legendary characters mingle with the story—Sarpedon, Helen, Deiphobus, Cassandra, "Celebrities at home," and are discovered to be respectable householders and freemen of the city, the way in which the characters go about their business *as if unobserved,* all this was quite new in the art of Christian Europe, and has remained novel

in poetry. The great triumphs of Russian realism especially to be found in Tolstoy—that arch idealist, for in Tolstoy there is always at the back a sense of the littleness of life—no doubt reach further. In the "Death of Ivan Ilyitch" the history observed with such interested particularity is but a part, and a tiny part, of the Universal show, itself a mere spot in the Eternity of Being. And this mixture of extreme idealism and extreme materialism supplies a synthesis altogether beyond Chaucer. This is true, but it is strange that the romance of Troilus and Cressida should even suggest such a disclaimer.

At the close of this long poem, just before the instructions to the miswryter and the mismetrist, Chaucer says:

> Go litel book, go litel myn tregedie,
> Then god thy maker yet, er that he dye,
> So sende might to make in som comedie!

The commentators,[7] with an unanimity almost absolute, take these words to apply to "The Hous of Fame." To me, with the preceding verses,[8] they seem much more obviously to apply to "The Legend of Good

[7] One exception is Professor J. L. Lowes.

[8] "Troilus," 1772-1778:

> Bisechinge every lady bright of hewe,
> And every gentil womman, what she be,
> That al be that Criseyde was untrewe,
> That for that gilt she be not wrooth with me.
> Ye may hir gilt in othere bokes see;
> And gladlier I wol wryten, if yow leste,
> Penelopeës trouthe and good Alceste.

Women," the Prologue of which we know to be later than Troilus.[9] Indeed, it is common agreement among scholars that the whole Legend (Prologue and separate Tales) is late work, though the Tales do not seem to me to be altogether late. I like to please myself with the notion that Chaucer had been occupying himself at times, during the whole of his poetical career, with tales of women who had been unfortunate in love—short tales or, rather, instances, for probably the scale varied often. At length, when he is finishing Troilus, a long exercise on the opposite thesis of the unfortunate lover, a thesis with which also he had been playing all his life, he determined to bring all these tales into order, to revise them and to make a book. It is my guess that he got tired of this revision work or that his interest was drawn away to the great scheme of the Canterbury Collection, a scheme which, like all the rest of the latter day schemes, allowed him to make use of old material. This would at once explain the references to a much longer series of poems than the Legend we now have,[10] as also the unmistakable tone of youth in the Thisbe, Lucrece or Dido stories. The Prologue itself begins in an oldish tone. Dreams

[9] Because in the Prologue there is specific reference to Troilus:

> And of Criseyde thou hast seyd as thee liste,

or in A Text more explicitly still:

> Hast thou nat made in English eek the book
> How that Crisseyde Troilus forsook.

[10] See Appendix, Note A.

and romances may not be altogether false. We believe what the Church tells us :

> But natheles, yit wot I wel also,
> That ther nis noon dwelling in this contree,
> That either hath in heven or helle y-be.[1]

The dream, however, is slightly postponed. Chaucer opens by saying that he likes books, but that he likes

[1] A similar polite agnosticism as to detail closes the account of Arcite's death :

> His spirit chaunged hous, and wente ther,
> As I cam never, I can nat tellen wher.—ll. 1951-2.

What Chaucer easily accepted is found in a paraphrase of Boethius in "The Knight's Tale." For the Ultimate there is perfection, but this world in which we live is unhappily imperfect, fallen away from the "archetype Celestial," and consequently here nothing is at a stay :

> Than may men by this ordre wel discerne,
> That thilke moevere stable is and eterne.
> Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,
> That every part deryveth from his hool.
> For nature hath nat take his beginning
> Of no party ne cantel of a thing,
> But of a thing that parfit is and stable,
> Descending so, til it be corrumpable.
> And therfore, of his wyse purveyaunce,
> He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce,
> That speces of thinges and progressiouns
> Shullen enduren by successiouns,
> And nat eterne be, with-oute lyë :

One is reminded of Spenser's "Mutability," and the two lines :

> That speces of thinges and progressiouns
> Shullen enduren by successiouns
> And nat eterne be,

are not so very unlike Meredith's "Process."

a Spring morning better. On May Day, at dawn, his habit was to be at the resurrection of the daisy "whan that it shuld unclose," its annual resurrection that is, not its daily unclosing every morning. Thereafter Chaucer tells us that he went to sleep on May Day eve, intending "erly for to ryse," and sleeping dreamt this dream. Cupid, accompanied by Alcestis (indisputably a good woman), comes to the meadow and upbraids the poet for writing against women. Alcestis pleads for him. At length he is set the expiatory task of writing "The Legend of Good Women," tales of Cupid's saints, or stories of women who have suffered in love. This Prologue takes too long to get under way and to come to its story. The beautiful piece of natural description with which it opens drags rather. For all that it is beautiful:

> Forgeten had the erthe his pore estat
> Of winter,[2]

or again:

> To seen this flour ageín the sonne sprede,
> Whan hit upryseth erly by the morwe;
> That blisful sighte softneth al my sorwe.

It depends, indeed, how one takes it. Sometimes the resurrection of the Spring reneweth tears.

[2] Cf. "Romance of the Rose," ll. 61-62:

> And th'erthe wexeth proud withalle,
> For swote dewes that on it falle,
> And (al) the pore estat forget
> In which that winter hadde it set.

In the main the tone of this Prologue is elderly from the summing up of Love's, if not also of Life's, philosophy :

> Ne shal no trewe lover come in helle,

to the poet's favourite and tender line,

> But pitie renneth sone in gentil herte,[3]

but there is one insertion which I cannot but think comes from Chaucer's amorous prime, the lyrical rapture in which the poet is now said to indulge upon the appearance of Alcestis.[4] Before the beauty and the

[3] Prologue to "Legend of Good Women," l. 503 :

> But pitee renneth sone in gentil herte.

"The Knightes Tale," l. 903 :

> For Pitee renneth sone in gentil herte.

"The Marchant's Tale," l. 742 :

> Lo, pitee renneth sone in gentil herte.

"The Squieres Tale," l. 471 :

> That pitee renneth sone in gentil herte.

The only difference is in the junction word at the beginning.

[4] It would fatigue the reader to give the reasons for this opinion. It will be noticed that there is no mention of Alcestis, and though in another version (supposed by Dr. Skeat to be earlier) Alcestis is mentioned, I personally take the ballad in this other version to be a redraft of the poet's. In short, I suppose the insertion of the name Alcestis, and indeed the whole muddle in the references to the ballad, to be due to Chaucer's desire to fit in a song originally written with no thought of the wife of Admetus, but in celebration of his own lady. Those who suppose that version of the ballad, in which the name of Alcestis appears, to be the earlier version suggest that Chaucer omitted the name from what they take to be the later version from a desire to allow of a covert

beautiful qualities of this lady all brilliant adornments and all outshining virtues may as well shrink away ashamed:

> Hyd, Absolon, thy gilte tresses clere;
> Ester, ley thou thy meknesse al a-doun;
> Hyd, Jonathas, al thy frendly manere;
> Penalopee, and Marcia Catoun,
> Mak of your wyfhod no comparison;
> Hyde ye your beautes, Isoude and Eleyne,
> My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne.

The first story is that of Cleopatra, too short for any serious purpose. The heroine,

> fair as is the rose in May,

is stated to have killed herself as she could not live without Antony, and the portrait of character, thin as it is, is the portrait of the character of a

reference to the Queen, but this suggestion does not seem to me to meet all the difficulties of the reference. (See ll. 539-540 B, where the ballad is said to have been composed without a reference to Alcestis.) Besides, the mention of Absalom and Jonathan is very odd in connection with the "Legend of Good Women." Alcestis the perfect woman is to be preferred, in a piece written for this occasion, to a whole list of other well-known women. Then why mention males? But in a mere tribute to his own lady, written long before "The Legend," there is not the same inappropriateness in beginning with men. *All* brilliant adornments are to shrink away ashamed.

The question as to which version of the *whole poem* is the earlier is a very complicated one. For some reasons A would appear to be the earlier, for other reasons B. May not both be variants from one original, and A be not at all the direct ancestor of B?

different person from the Cleopatra of legend.[5] There is no merit beyond a rather good description of a mediaeval sea-fight, meant to be that of Actium, and the interest there is chiefly antiquarian.[6]

The second story, on the other hand, is full of fresh charm. The episode of the wall is told very naturally, as naturally as prettily:

> And thus hir wardeins wolde they deceyve.
> And every day this wal they wolde threte,
> And wisshe to god, that it were doun y-bete.
> Thus wolde they seyn—"allas! thou wikked wal,
> Through thyn envye thou us lettest al!
> Why nilt thou cleve, or fallen al a-two?
> Or, at the leste, but thou woldest so,
> Yit woldestow but ones lete us mete,
> Or ones that we mighte kissen swete,
> Than were we covered of our cares colde.
> But natheles, yit be we to thee holde
> In as muche as thou suffrest for to goon
> Our wordes through thy lyme and eek thy stoon.
> Yit oghte we with thee ben wel apayd."
> And whan thise ydel wordes weren sayd,
> The colde wal they wolden kisse of stoon,
> And take hir leve, and forth they wolden goon.
> And this was gladly in the even-tyde
> Or wonder erly, lest men hit espyde;

[5] It is worth while to notice that Chaucer in his *physical* description had not learnt to go wrong. "The line of the Ptolemies was of the purest Grecian breed, with a purity of which they were proud, and which they sought to preserve by close intermarriage within their house. But Shakespeare has so impressed his own idea of Cleopatra on the world that later painters and poets have followed suit ever since." "Shakespeare's Roman Plays and their Background" by M. W. MacCallum.

[6] ll. 56-71.

And later there is a transcript from life, so direct as almost to be frightening. Pyramus has been last at the meeting place outside the city, and believing the absent Thisbe to be dead, has stabbed himself. Thisbe, who had been seeking refuge in the cave, now ventures fearfully forth:

> Now Tisbe, which that wiste nat of this,
> But sitting in her drede, she thoghte thus,
> "If hit so falle that my Piramus
> Be comen hider, and may me nat y-finde,
> He may me holden fals and eek unkinde."
> And out she comth, and after him gan espyen
> Bothe with her herte and with her yën,
> And thoghte, "I wol him tellen of my drede
> Bothe of the leonesse and al my dede."
> And at the laste her love than hath she founde
> Beting with his heles on the grounde.

Dido's story has rather too much in it for Chaucer's purpose, which was to tell the story shortly, but it is also a charming thing. There is the pretty picture of the meeting between Aeneas and Venus, clad as a huntress in the Libyan wood, very naïve:

> "I nam no goddes, soothly," quod she tho;
> "For maidens walken in this contree here,
> With arwes and with bowe, in this manere."[7]

Afterwards he sees Dido in the temple:

> So yong, so lusty, with her eyen glade,[8]

[7] A comparison with Virgil emphasises the poetical value of slight differences.

[8] Cf. "Romance of the Rose," old English version, ll. 1216-1217, account of Fraunchyse:

> With eyen gladde, and browes bente;

Such joy does Aeneas find in her company that, after his tossing on the outrageful sea, it is like entering into heaven:

> This Eneas is come to Paradys
> Out of the swolow of helle.

And there is a later passage, which Morris must have often conned, describing the lovers ready to start for the hunt. Passages after passages in the Earthly Paradise are but faint echoes of it; echoes heard in an emptier day:

> The dawening up-rist out of the see;
> This amorous quene chargeth her meynee
> The nettes dresse, and speres brode and kene;
> An hunting wol this lusty fresshe quene;
> So priketh her this newe joly wo.
> To hors is al her lusty folk y-go;
> Un-to the court the houndes been y-broght,
> And up-on coursers, swift as any thoght,
> Her yonge knightes hoven al aboute,
> And of her wommen eek an huge route.
> Up-on a thikke palfrey, paper-whyt,
> With sadel rede, enbrouded with delyt,
> Of gold the barres up-enbossed hye,
> Sit Dido, al in gold and perre wrye;
> And she is fair, as is the brighte morwe,
> That heleth seke folk of nightes sorwe.
> Up-on a courser, startling as the fyr,
> Men mighte turne him with a litel wyr,
> Sit Eneas, lyk Phebus to devyse;
> So was he fresshe arayed in his wyse.
> The fomy brydel with the bit of gold
> Governeth he, right as him-self hath wold.
> And forth this noble quene thus lat I ryde
> An hunting, with this Troyan by her syde.

The legend of Hypsipyle and Medea is much more the legend of Jason, about whose treachery the three hundred lines speak. It is loosely arranged, the story of Hypsipyle taking up so much space that Medea has to be crowded in at the close. The thing chiefly striking is the opening outburst against Jason. Indignation against a legendary character of long ago sounds quaint to grown up ears, but of such is the generous heart of youth.[9] So oddly joined, indeed, are those poems of youth and age that almost immediately following upon this overflow there is the comment of middle age upon Jason's success:

> For ever as tendre a capoun et the fox,
> Thogh he be fals and hath the foul betrayed,
> As shal the good-man that ther-for hath payed.

Lucrece is a very childish thing in its planning, the dreadful story being told by one who has no heart for dreadfulness. It is actually pleasantly told, and so as to leave a pleasant impression, which is to say that its tone is quite below the story. The sketch of the domestic bliss of Collatine and his wife is beautiful in its simplicity:

> And she anoon up roos, with blisful chere,
> And kiste him, as of wyves is the wone.

Tarquin, once he has seen her, cannot, even though absent, put her image from his mind. This said, there

[9] If that I live, thy name shal be shove
In English, that thy sleighte shal be knowe!

Like one of Keats' resolutions in "Endymion."

is a curious piece of quiet observation appearing in a simile :

> " Thus lay her heer, and thus fresh was her hewe ;
> Thus sat, thus spak, thus span ; this was her chere,
> Thus fair she was, and this was her manere."
> Al this conceit his herte hath now y-take.
> And, as the see, with tempest al to-shake,
> That, after whan the storm is al ago,
> Yet wol the water quappe a day or two,
> Right so, thogh that her forme wer absent,
> The plesaunce of her forme was present.[1]

The last four stories are all inadequate. Ariadne's actual passioning, though in a very quiet tone, is one of the great passages in poetry, but it is the only thing in the story that touches us :

> Right in the dawening awaketh she,
> And gropeth in the bedde, and fond right noght.
> " Allas ! " quod she, " that ever I was wroght !
> I am betrayed ! " and her heer to-rente,
> And to the stronde bar-fot faste she wente,
> And cryed, " Theseus ! myn herte swete !
> Wher be ye, that I may nat with yow mete,
> And mighte thus with bestes been y-slain? "
> The holwe rokkes answerde her again ;
> No man she saw, and yit shyned the mone,
> And hye upon a rokke she wente sone,
> And saw his barge sailing in the see.

The legend of Philomela is also pleasantly and gently told, much too gently for the gruesome tragedy, as if Chaucer did not care to face it. There was not the

[1] Shakespeare had read this story. Cf.

> And in the night ful theefly gan he stalke,

and :

> Right as a wolf that fynt a lamb aloon.

same reason for inadequacy in the tender story of Phyllis. Here the tone is suitable enough, but one's fancy is not caught, though there is a pretty word for the heroine; and it opens with a breath of romance:

> Destroyed is of Troye the citee;
> This Demophon com sailing in the see
> Toward Athenes, to his paleys large;

As to Hypermnestra, it is enough to say that the mediaeval Church frowning on the marriage of cousins, Chaucer was afraid of the Danäan legend.

We come now to the "Canterbury Tales," of which the scheme[2] was that one was to be told by each pilgrim going and coming back. In fact, we have

[2] The disputed words are:

> This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,
> That ech of yow, to shorte with your weye,
> In this viage, shal telle tales tweye,
> To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,
> And hom-ward he shal tellen othere two,
> Of aventures that whylom han bifalle.
>
> Prologue, 790-795.

But all the other references assume a scheme of one going and one returning (cp. Prologue to "Parson's Tale," l. 16, et seq., and "Wordes of the Host to the Frankelin," ll. 25-26). We must assume either that ll. 793-794 are an erring interpolation or that, as Dr. Morris suggested, the passage is corrupt. If we put a semicolon at hom-ward; and change othere for some word meaning thuswise we get the required sense.

> To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so
> And homward; he shal tellen *thuswise* two,

The slip is in the word othere. What is meant is that homeward he shall tell another and altogether two, and thus the jumble arose. One and another and that is two, has become, one and

only twenty-four tales, but the *scheme* is for all intents and purposes fully carried out. Of the pilgrims *fully* described in the Prologue we have as tale-tellers all but two—the knight's yeoman and the ploughman. It must be remembered that the scheme was a dramatic scheme, and that the Tales are, in the main, and roughly, and with some very obvious exceptions, told in character by characters freely diversified. At anyrate, they are generally not inconsonant with the habit of the characters. In this way Chaucer arranges for himself something similar to a dramatic freedom. No doubt he is just as responsible for the tone of the Shipman as Milton for the tone of Lucifer, but he is no more responsible. Moreover, while it was not always necessary to be dramatic and the poet was free to say what he wanted when he chose, such a scheme did really necessitate *some* variety of tone. It avoided at a stroke what had never been avoided before—for even Boccaccio's tale-tellers are not discriminated but by sex, and not always even by that—the one manner of the narrator. If we add that Chaucer has interspersed his tales with separate prologues and end-pieces, short character sketches to remind us of the variety of voice, we may fairly say that something of the flexible interest of drama is here lent to a series of narratives.

another and other two, or to follow Dr. Morris's suggested reading:

To Caunterbury-ward I mene it, o,
And homward he shall tell another to, i.e. also.

It is incredible that Chaucer should have contemplated publishing 120 Tales. He had no such repertoire.

Of course the tales are all Chaucer's, that is to say, most of them are Chaucerian, but no narrative poet had ever invented a scheme which allowed him to run so freely, in any separate tale, to any end of his nature that he chose. A foolish tale can be told without serious comment, a knightly tale without the interpolation of a joke, and a ribald tale, for after all this was the freedom of which Chaucer was especially thinking, at least without full reproof. But quite apart from this special freedom there is a gain in general freedom of incalculable value. What is due to the narrator is seldom thought of, and it is the thought of what is due to the narrator that so constantly, with other poets, destroys the disinterestedness of the narrative. Here the tale is told for the tale's sake. To give sense to a phrase that usually has none, these tales do really tell themselves. The subject is in sympathy with the spokesman and the spokesman with the subject. This is the huge merit that comes out of the best narrative scheme ever invented, for Chaucer was not in himself, and except when acting on a hint, a truly various poet. Previously to the "Canterbury Tales" his manner is marked, the manner of the gentle and courtly amorist. It was the manner he considered due to himself, the habit or clothing in which he chose to appear. The one exception is "Troilus and Cressida," where his use of the worsened third party also yields him dramatic variety, and of the kind he loved.

Of the Prologue itself all the best things have been said by Dryden, whose eye, in days before Tyrwhitt, marked

Nature breaking through a stumbling and broken text. He is speaking of Ovid and Chaucer in the Preface to his "Fables." "I see Baucis and Philemon as perfectly before me as if some ancient painter had drawn them; and all the pilgrims in the 'Canterbury Tales,' their humours, their features, and their very dress, as distinctly as if I had supped with them at the Tabard." And later of the diversity of the characters: "But enough of this; there is such a variety of game springing up before me that I am distracted in my choice, and know not which to follow. It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty. We have our forefathers and great-grand-dames all before us, as they were in Chaucer's days: their general characters are still remaining in mankind, and even in England, though they are called by other names than those of monks, and friars, and canons, and lady-abbesses, and nuns; for mankind is ever the same, and nothing lost out of nature, though everything is altered."

This last remark is developed by Blake in his own heightened manner—when defending his picture, or rather when exalting it above the "dumb dollies" of Stothard. "The characters[3] of Chaucer's 'Pilgrims' are the characters which compose all ages and nations. As one age falls another rises, different to mortal sight, but to immortals only the same; for we see the same characters repeated again and again, in animals, vege-

[3] Blake when he wrote this was fifty-two, and must have read Dryden's "Fables."

tables, and minerals, and in men. Nothing new occurs in identical existence; accident ever varies, substance can never suffer change or decay."

"Of Chaucer's characters, as described in his 'Canterbury Tales,' some of the names or titles are altered by time, but the characters themselves forever remain unaltered; and consequently, they are the physiognomies or lineaments of universal human life, beyond which nature never steps. Names alter, things never alter. I have known multitudes of those who would have been monks in the age of monkery, who in this deistical age are Deists. As Newton numbered the stars, and as Linnæus numbered the plants, so Chaucer numbered the classes of men. The Painter has consequently varied the heads and forms of his personages into all nature's varieties; the horses he has also varied to accord with their riders."

"Chaucer's characters are a description of the eternal Principles that exist in all ages," and again: "Chaucer's characters live age after age. Every age is a Canterbury Pilgrimage; we all pass on, each sustaining one or other of these characters; nor can a child be born who is not one of these characters of Chaucer." Equally exaggeratedly Blake goes on: "The Docter of Physic is described as the first of his profession: perfect, learned, completely Master and Doctor in his art. Thus the reader will observe that Chaucer makes every one of his characters perfect in his kind; every one is an Antique statue, *the image of a class and not an imperfect individual*," and here at

last we have the actual word. The Prologue *is* a panorama of great type characters [4] rather than a series of differing individualities, type characters that tend always to recur, as, for instance, the perpetual solicitor, with his huge desk, his bundles of tied papers, his many pens,

> And yet he seemed bisier than he was.

Nowhere is there such a gallery in so little room, each character type distinct.

The truth of this need not hide from us that we have here also mediaeval pictures. There is no sketch of the fleeting that has more power to carry us back to the fled. One gets into the time itself, as when Chaucer speaks familiarly to us of the sieges of long ago, at which his actual knight had actually been.

Nor is this vision of the real (always a solemn thing if one comes to think of it) brought before us by solemnity. On the contrary, the procession moves with all the life of a wave, the whole account being admirably peppered with sly humour, not so much so as to distract the attention from the business of seeing, but to enable it the better to see.

Over all there is a kind of easy morality, a middle view; human beings are not expected to be particularly good; the most have vices, but they are not such bad fellows and will pass. This is to be the poet, or rather

[4] It need hardly be said that Chaucer was not attempting to paint permanent types, but in striking at the characteristics of some types, he struck at what was permanent in them. That he was *thinking* of the class as much as of the individual I make no doubt.

the humorous observer, both of the middle man and of middle age. There is no character with ideal springs. Even the knight is a prosaic knight, like a retired general to-day—a gentleman, but with no foolishness of romance. The tone of the writer is cynical, but not unpleasantly so, the natural cynicism of middle life, a sneer behind the smile, though it is so humorous it is scarcely defined when we call it a sneer. Chaucer thinks little of these people who are exhibited in character, as indeed we all do, and speak more slightingly when we say we were talking to a young girl or a doctor than if we said we had met Dr. Brown or Mary Jones. Individuality, with its capacity for endless variation, has always in it, as still escaping us, something of the dignified, and so it seems here as if there were some belittlement in all the pilgrims being so like themselves. We honour no one when we say boys will be boys; the squire's curly locks become a mannerism, and we think of him as an oddity for being curly. Just as mimicry makes us think less of the person mimicked, these people are the less from their being able to be thus hit off; nor is their outward appearance, by which, in fact, we can most easily see to what oar others are chained, of merely secondary interest. Physical defects are noted among the other typical features, and I smile, sometimes, when I think how many innocents are, every year, expected to understand this profound review of the human river carrying its strange cargo to the ocean of infinity. The saturnine itself is not far away, as when Chaucer relieves his account

of the Shipman with his jests. "By water he sente hem hoom to every lond." The cook, whose business it is to prepare food for others, will soon be meat for worms.

(And) on his shine a mormal hadde he.

One sees from this Prologue, too, that Chaucer disliked the professional religious people, and thought most of them humbugs and hypocrites. There is marked satire on worldly ecclesiastics, so much so as to betray, or rather to show, an attitude of mind. In fact, I doubt if the proportion of bad "religious" to good was higher at any time than Chaucer puts it. To make up for this, the colour of white is laid all over the Poor Parson, genuinely enough no doubt, but one feels Chaucer is anxious expressly to say that it is not the Church, but defaulting members of the Church, he is attacking. It is not less certain that Chaucer was cautious than that his temper was definitely anti-ecclesiastical.

After the Prologue comes the "Knight's Tale," and after that the words between the Host and the Miller. All this, with the Miller insisting on telling the next tale, and the quarrel with the Reeve the moment the Miller has said he will speak about the worsting of a Carpenter—all this is dialogue of the liveliest. And its vivacity is proper. Chaucer knows that gentlefolk are to read his book, the most of mankind indeed, and so he is careful with a preface to these tales. If he adds an actual apology, it must be clear he is not responsible. In the Reeve's Prologue the music is stilled. The Miller has made sport of the Reeve's trade, and it

would now be his turn, but, alas! he is old. There is Dutch painting here, but also of sad colour, not the less true for that:

> For sikerly, whan I was bore, anon
> Deeth drogh the tappe of lyf and leet it gon;
> And ever sith hath so the tappe y-ronne,
> Til that almost al empty is the tonne.
> The streem of lyf now droppeth on the chimbe;
> The sely tonge may wel ringe and chimbe
> Of wrecchednesse that passed is ful yore;
> With olde folk, save dotage, is namore.[5]

However, the Reeve allows himself to be seduced from his "prechyng." In the Cook's Prologue there is no change of refinement, merely a burst of satisfaction on the part of the cook.

So far, so bad! One supposes that the "Man of Law's Tale" followed. In any case, in the words that precede it, there is a business note, a tone of settling down. Graveairs is called on, and Chaucer takes the opportunity to introduce a reference to his tales of love, the mediaeval form of "By the same author." The Man of Law tells of "the sage and serious" adventures of Constance. The words of the Host, The Parson, and the Shipman are few, and the Host's outbreak:

> O Jankin be ye there?
> I smelle a loller in the wind,

[5] Cf. "Romance of the Rose," ll. 379-384, on Time:

> For (er) men thinke it redily,
> Three tymes been y-passed by.
> The tyme, that may not soiourne,
> But goth, and never may retourne,
> As water that doun renneth ay,
> But never drope retourne may.

is meant to prepare the reader for a tale that will not be pious. This tale also is followed by very few words, just enough—the Host's reverential address to the Lady Prioress—to prepare us for the very different tone of her story. Then comes Chaucer's own turn, of which he avails himself to write a parody of the chivalric ballads, and thereafter, in prose, a singularly dull sermon on the virtues of patience and forgiveness. In neither case is there any lifting of the dramatic cover, and we are not told what sort of poet was this poet in his own proper person. On the contrary, the comment on the "Tale of Melibee" is supplied not by Chaucer but by the Host—a lively piece of domestic comedy.

We come to the too numerous instances of the "Monk's Tale," of which the knight complains as depressing, and to which the Host, in his own manner, also takes exception—a short piece of character differentiation beautifully done; the knight's objections being in the tone of a gentleman, the Host, as all common folk, "taking up" the words of the narrator. This good fellow appears again after the "Doctor's Tale" with his excited comment on the sad story of Virginia, the true moral indignation of the simple heart:

> Our Hoste gan to swere as he were wood,
> "Harrow!" quod he, "by nayles and by blood!
> This was a fals cherl and a fals justyse!
> As shamful deeth as herte may devyse
> Come to thise juges and hir advocats!
> Algate this sely mayde is slayn, allas!
> Allas! to dere boghte she beautee!

The preamble to the next tale is curious, a not wholly bad humoured but certainly wholly contemptuous satire on Pardoners put into the mouth of the Pardoner himself:

> Thus spitte I out my venim under hewe
> Of holynesse to seme holy and trewe.

No one speaks so of himself;[7] the dramatic nature of these character sketches being temporarily forgotten owing, doubtless, to some special animus of the poet's. Very different is the "Wife of Bath's" Prologue. At the close of the "Pardoner's Tale" the Pardoner goes on speaking, asking the pilgrims directly for money. He has concluded his sermon on avarice, and, as he thinks, opened their purses. The Host disillusions him on that point, and on this spurt of life we may suppose the "Wife of Bath's" Prologue to follow. It is an essay in "the Ring and the Book" manner, a full-length character of the Wife of Bath, the wife depicting herself in speaking of others, no third-party account, like the Pardoner's supposed speaking; written by an author, you would say, who had an entirely opposite conception of his business from the author of "The Pardoner's" Prologue—true drama, as elaborate a self-betrayal as was ever devised by comedy.

The squabble between the Summoner and the Friar breaks out very naturally. It is the Friar who says to the Wife jokingly, 'this was a long preamble.' The

[7] Professor Legouis compares here "The Romance of the Rose," the undramatic Fals Semblant, ll. 6081, et seq.

Summoner, anxious to take him up, takes up the word. The Friar says—it is well; he will in good time tell a tale of a Summoner. The Summoner replies that he can beat him at that with tales of Friars. When this quarrel is stilled the Wife of Bath gets her hearing. At the end the Friar opens on the Summoner again, the Summoner saying he will bide his time. The Host's pacification is exactly that smoothing on both sides in which the English middle class still loves to indulge:

> Our host tho spak, "a! sire, ye sholde be hende
> And curteys, as a man of your estaat;
> In companye we wol have no debaat.
> Telleth your tale, and lat the Somnour be."
> "Nay," quod the Somnour, "lat him seye to me
> What so him list; whan it comth to my lot,
> By god, I shal him quyten every grot.
> I shal him tellen which a greet honour
> It is to be a flateringe limitour;
> And his offyce I shal him telle, y-wis."
> Our host answerde, "pees, na-more of this."
> And after this he seyde un-to the Frere,
> "Tel forth your tale, leve maister deere."

The "Friar's Tale" is hardly ended when the Summoner breaks out with Dantesque vigour, at last with his story bringing the squabble to a close. After the "Summoner's Tale" it is customary to place the Clerk's, of which the prologue is very beautifully written, with its grave reminiscence of Petrarch and Linian:

> But deeth, that wol nat suffre us dwellen heer
> But as it were a twinkling of an yë,
> Hem bothe hath slayn and alle shul we dyë.

At the end of the tale of Griselda's patience, just as at the end of the tale of Melibeus and his wife, there is put in opposition the actual fact—in both cases suitably. To the foolish Patience there was opposed the Host's own rather burlesque spouse, and now to Griselda the Merchant's serious complaint of his matrimony. For some time after this the prologues and end-pieces are either absent or sketchy—aliquando dormitat, but, as the Pilgrims near Canterbury, Chaucer forces the pace. We are introduced to two additional characters, action, and an entirely new situation. A canon and his yeoman overtake the company, riding violently to do so. Very naturally they fall into chat with the others, and the yeoman begins telling of his master, giving him a good send-off, feeling his ground. Gradually he begins to talk more freely, and the Canon overhearing, rides up to reprove him. The yeoman, however, is now too far in, and persists in telling the story. The Canon full of chagrin rides away. All this is set out at length, and though there is nothing specially memorable, it is one of the most natural pieces of writing in Chaucer. It reads just like an account of something that had been seen, two riders overtaking a knot of travellers, and the servant complaining of his master for some ill-doing.

After the yeoman has contributed his part, some further squabbling—beautifully life-like—breaks out among the pilgrims. The cook is called upon, but the cook is drunk. The Manciple says he is too drunk,

and he will tell his tale for him. He abuses the cook for being drunk. The cook is enraged, and in his drunken anger falls off his horse:

And to the maunciple thanne spak our host,
"By-cause drink hath dominacioun
Upon this man, by my savacioun
I trowe he lewedly wolde telle his tale.
For, were it wyn, or old or moysty ale,
That he hath dronke, he speketh in his nose,
And fneseth faste, and eek he hath the pose.
He hath also to do more than y-nough
To kepe him and his capel out of slough;
And, if he falle from his capel eft-sone,
Than shul we alle have y-nough to done,
In lifting up his hevy dronken cors.
Telle on thy tale, of him make I no fors.
But yet, maunciple, in feith thou art to nyce,
Thus openly repreve him of his vyce.
Another day he wol, peraventure,
Reclayme thee, and bringe thee to lure;
I mene, he speke wol of smale thinges,
As for to pinchen at thy rekeninges,
That wer not honeste, if it cam to preef."
"No," quod the maunciple, "that were a greet mescheef!
So mighte he lightly bringe me in the snare.
Yet hadde I lever payen for the mare
Which he rit on, than he sholde with me stryve;
I wol not wratthe him, al-so mote I thryve!
That that I spak, I seyde it in my bourde;
And wite ye what? I have heer, in a gourde,
A draught of wyn, ye, of a rype grape,
And right anon ye shul seen a good jape.
This cook shal drinke ther-of, if I may;
Up peyne of deeth, he wol nat seye me nay!"
And certeinly, to tellen as it was,
Of this vessel the cook drank faste, allas!

What neded him? he drank y-nough biforn.
And whan he hadde pouped in this horn,
To the maunciple he took the gourde agayn;
And of that drinke the cook was wonder fayn,
And thanked him in swich wyse as he coude.
Than gan our host to laughen wonder loude,
And seyde, "I see wel, it is necessarie,
Wher that we goon, good drink we with us carie;
For that wol turne rancour and disese
T'acord and love, and many a wrong apese.
O thou Bachus, y-blessed be thy name,
That so can turnen ernest in-to game!
Worship and thank be to thy deitee!
Of that matere ye gete na-more of me.
Tel on thy tale, maunciple, I thee preye."
"Wel, sir," quod he, "now herkneth what I seye."

Is not this very natural? but the tale so introduced is perhaps the poorest in the collection.

It would be no ineffective service to literature to print the general Prologue and all these sub-prologues together. They furnish our easiest conspectus of Chaucer on his level, the Chaucer to whom the world has listened, the first great English Comedian. There are side scenes in Shakespeare's "Henry IV." where we can study this art in a little space; character studies of side characters, little thumb-nail sketches done to the life. But Shakespeare has seldom patience for such faithfulness. It is Chaucer who finds it perpetually entertaining—the Comedy provided for every man when he opens his eyes, if only he will not colour his vision with prepossessions, with his own individuality, or by imagining things.

Some discrimination in his observation of course

Chaucer had, for it is not sufficient to be a great Comedian, the great Comedian must find his opportunity where his eye is not merely observant but delighted. It was no small portion of the mediaeval panorama that flitted before Chaucer, but his predilection was for one part of it, that part where common humours abounded, where natural dispositions would crop up surprisingly, where the romp of life was unashamed: nor is it disputable that he was taken to his world's heart largely owing to the vigour of this delight. The sane eighteenth century critics, whom it is seldom safe to contradict, recognised this at once. To eighteenth century criticism we may add something of poetical insight, a quality in the shades of which it was deficient, but we are not at the same liberty to take away. Johnson even about Shakespeare said little that was wrong, though what Johnson did not say about Shakespeare would profitably fill a volume. And so Addison, speaking in 1694, without much reading at his back and therefore the better representing the view of his time, refers to Chaucer solely as a humorist out of date. Thomson's reference in his "Summer" is equally unequivocal. It occurs where he refers to the

> laughing sage,
> Chaucer, whose native manners painting verse—[8]

as good a one line character as could be given. Eighty years after Addison, Thomas Warton, in illustration

[8] It is interesting that Lydgate begins his reference to Chaucer in the same way:

> "My maister Chaucer, with his fresh commedies."

and following Dryden, strikes straight for the wonderful character sketches that open the "Miller's Tale," passages admired by Scott's visionary in "Peveril": while Cowper in the very un-Cowperian satire, "Anti-Thelypthora," burlesquely apologising for the absence of Chaucerian license, says more politely what Pope fifty years before had said. It is not unfair to take references that span a long century and come equally from romantic and anti-romantic as conclusive of the view of the natural reader.

And indeed the flotsam of the species, when low enough to let Nature have her run, and without education to combat propensity, are full of life and animality, gay offspring of the great Immoralist. A worthless boy, with an appropriately foolish occupation, all blague and unreality, like Astrology, his head full of songs and lightsomeness, is no more hated by her or by Chaucer than the motes by the discovering Sun. It is the push in such sketches that is unsurpassable. How much painting as vivid is there in "The Merry Wives" or anywhere in Shakespeare's romantic gallery? And if it is no longer fastidiously pleasing that is no detraction from its life. Even the Wife of Bath does not foot it so featly. Perhaps Chaucer was considering the tone appropriate to a middle-aged speaker, perhaps, middle-aged himself, he could not repeat his rush of gaiety. And yet I suppose it is in this Prologue, as a Comedian occupied with life itself, and hardly at all with his own frolic, that Chaucer is at his zenith. There is the true ramble of actual life in it, a fund of honest drollery

and a shamelessness so unaffected that we marvel at the art of clothes. One comes next to an exercise in slow irony, "The Summoner's Tale," prefaced very elaborately by a prologue quarrel, the "Friar's Tale," and then prologue quarrelling again, for if Chaucer was uneasy he would spare no pains for that. Clearly there was personal hatred of the Friarage to explain both this trouble of his and his huge delight in his contempt.

What is amazing in all these stories is the zest, a strange interested intentness, as if Chaucer were hardly able to stop or to let go. If one compares them with such a tale as the "Shipman's," in the hardish triumphant tone of Boccaccio's intrigue, one sees how peculiarly they are his. It is not that in the "Shipman's Tale" the interest of the narrative is not sustained, so that what is wanting in this Cisalpine's to make it Chaucer's is only a true Englishness. The opening of the "Merchant's Tale," on the other hand, though the plot was also used by Boccaccio, shows Chaucer at his ripest—pure comedy, easy, innocent, and as of course. One recalls to oneself the insouciance of some old Dutch family picture, and yet the tone is not Dutch, nothing natively or discriminatively boorish, just plain unstudied English, the healthy English plainness and coarseness before civilisation had done so much to refine and as much to cosmopolitanise the national character. Except for a liberty of occasional license, it is only at the end that this tale becomes for modern purposes impossible. Not only on gross subjects then does reality break from Chaucer;

the mere fact that he is dealing with uncovered feeling makes him vital, and all through this tale, even when he is treating of no matters, there runs a free rejoicing flow. Not to admit this is to write of Chaucer without saying anything. We need not suppose, of course, that the sense of shock, though always part of the effect, was felt in the same degree by his immediate public, any more than we need suppose that his success was essentially due to his employment of impossible situations. No—his vogue was popular because, while extracting from the familiar experiences of the people an element they recognised as droll, he supplied them with self-reflections that surprised with the insistence of their life. Nor was there anything substantially illegitimate. Unlike Sterne, he rarely dropped impudently behind his time. We may say, more accurately, that Chaucer's comic excursion was as legitimate as Fielding's, representing, if more liberally, also consonantly the grosser tone of his day. About both writers there was the same easy immoralism. Of anti-moralism, about Chaucer at least, little. His mode was neither to palliate nor to suggest imitation. At the core it was native, for what our forefathers loved was never a license of judgment but a license of speech.

To carry such a comparison further would be the childishness of criticism. Whatever were Fielding's successes, they were won by the methods of the prose-writer, by the use of a journeyman's candour, and by his bold holding on his way: Chaucer's triumphs as a Comedian, by the abandon of poetry. It was an achieve-

ment strictly without parallel, for while the field was quite limited, much more limited than Fielding's, even often farcical, the manner was that of the finished Comedian, a thing done as comprehensively as dancingly, play alternating with power, and with power as spontaneous as the play. At the same time we should be careful not by superlatives to say too much. The manner is by no means the manner of Shakespeare, for what distinguished the comic side of Chaucer's genius was its observational quality, its literalness in observing as well as its joy in observation. The comic Shakespeare is not contented with observation. When the comic Shakespeare is excited or delighted there is always a push beyond nature, he is not satisfied with discovery, he must make. "Nothing," as Hazlitt says, "can go much lower in intellect or morals than many of the characters' in both parts of Henry IV," and yet they seldom affront us because of this infusion of the poet. In Chaucer there is no such third party between us and what is seen. The experience is not transmuted. It is our own eyes we seem to be using, and we are consequently constantly being brought up with what affects us as a disclosure. Such must always have been part of the success—an occasional elfin surprise. But such effects, with the increase of reserve, may affect us in changing proportion, and what was once a sally fall to the level of a bêtise. Nor is it material to urge that Chaucer's romp has not lost its interest; the true question is whether that interest has preserved its character and if Civilisation, with its ranging outlook, is not

apt to find chiefly quaint what still illustrates as rudely natural. How uninformed is that claim that the value of literature is unaffected by its subjects losing their prominence, and how insincere must one be with oneself not to see that it is everything to a writer whether or not he is travelling on the high road. We must say as much as this, for, while what spoke for Shakespeare still speaks for him, the accents of Chaucer's voice fall on ears less seriously attentive. The point of interest has shifted, and Meredith's cryptogram, "The Sage Enamoured," is more material reading to a living intelligence than much of his incomparable flow. I suppose the reason is that Chaucer is not primarily a poet, but a comedian, and the subjects of comedy change. We admire the art of Terence's "Self-Tormentor," but what to us are changeling children or the impudence of slaves. We are thinking of our own concerns, and while the aesthete admires and the student is interested, the mind is busied with other things.

Chaucer's general appeal to us to-day is therefore that of a much more various and even-sided writer than, in fact, he actually was. His comedy, shorn of its excesses, does not count for so much in a composite judgment, and we see him fairly—or, rather, unfairly—as speaking fairly from every side. We read the "Nun's Priest's Tale" side by side with that of the "Prioress," and see him rather as he appears in "Troilus and Cressida," one in whom there is a blend of reality and romance. But this Chaucer is in truth

not, even largely, the Chaucer who really existed—the humorous observer. With the almost total excision of so full a vein we have lost the rubicund in the face. We have to deal with a writer in whom there is apparently now lacking that element we call the Titan-esque.

Of this Chaucer it is enough to say that the charm, though low-toned, is perennial. The opening of kind affections, tender partings, the busy clutter and frou-frou of human existence, these are things in regard to which we have not to deal with changed values. Moreover, the vein of romance in Chaucer, though not ostentatiously displayed, is everywhere present. It runs as a deep sub-current through the reality of "Troilus and Cressida," and keeps cropping up in the Tales in odd places, as when the Summoner meets the fiend in the wood disguised as a yeoman, described with the usual romantic line,

A bowe he bar, and arwes brighte and kene.

Nevertheless, when he is openly romantic, one is generally brought up, as in the "Legend of Good Women," by droppings into realism, or if, as in the well-managed "Knight's Tale," seldom by that, by longueurs that speak as plainly of a task. I do not say that Chaucer the observer had not seen his knights and ladies, but he viewed them with no inquiring eye, or, rather, with an eye sufficiently inquiring to know the difference between what they talked about and how they lived. Romance does not exhibit the full flow of his genius—a secondary and gentler stream; the

"Knight's Tale," which is known to multitudes of young readers, and which probably shows best the free ramble of his romantic faculty, being even slow. A tale of love in which there is no love-making, and in which, in fact, the heroine only speaks when praying for escape from her lovers, can have no great sympathetic interest, nor can we be said to care greatly whether Palamon or Arcite wins the absent Emily. Still we do care, and are all Palamonians for no reason more obvious than that he saw her first. One suspects the real reason is that the sympathies of the success-honouring poet, for he knew what was to be, were with Palamon from the start.

To speak more particularly, in the "Knight's Tale" there are some things prettily expressed. Theseus, when he hears the tale of the Argive widows, is much moved:

> Him thoughte that his herte wolde breke,

and there is pleasant feeling in the lines that describe the happiness of all, when he has agreed to let his knightly prisoners decide the issue by the test of arms:

> And thus with good hope and with herte blythe
> They take hir leve, and hom-ward gonne they ryde
> To Thebes, with his olde walles wyde.

With this prettiness of romance there go some strokes of nature—in the close attentive drawing in the detail of the painting in Mar's Temple, otherwise largely a translation, in the pause before the spring forward of the charging knights—

> In goon the speres ful sadly in arest,

or in things that slip out.

There is one dramatic moment when Palamon first sees Emily:

> This sorweful prisoner, this Palamoun,
> Goth in the chambre, roming to and fro,
> And to him-self compleyning of his wo;
> That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, "alas!"
> And so bifel by aventure or cas,
> That thurgh a window, thikke of many a barre
> Of yren greet, and square as any sparre,
> He caste his eye upon Emelya,
> And ther-with-al he bleynte, and cryde "a!"

where nothing is added to the simplicity of the exclamation. Arcite's dying speech is touchingly plain,[9] and the mourners express their sense of the irony of things very ingenuously.

> "Why woldestow be deed; thise wommen crye,
> "And haddest gold y-nough and Emelye?"

Earlier in the poem Chaucer's medical advice is as sound:

> And certeinly, ther nature wol nat wirche,
> Far-wel phisyk! go ber the man to chirche!

One may say that the disposition of this poet was towards naturalism.

The Franklin's story is more openly romantic; I mean there is more in it of the bizarre, and this strangeness of narrative, suiting with the turns of Chaucer's fancy, fixes the tale upon the mind.

A gentle knight of Brittany, Arveragus, married most happily to a noble lady, Dorigen, comes to be absent from home for two years seeking honour in England.

> [9] What is this world? what asketh men to have?
> Now with his love, now in his colde grave.

His wife, lamenting their long estrangement, and beset with nervous fears, wanders by the sea coast, and there, sitting down, exclaims against the dangerous rocks guarding the strand: her returning husband may meet with misadventure among them. The kindness of her friends attempts to distract her by playings in a garden and by dances. At one of these dances there was a squire, Aurelius, who had fallen in love with Dorigen, and was mad enough to suppose that she might love him in return. She says No, and by way of emphasis, and because the thing was so much in her mind, tells him that only if he could remove the rocks, dangerous to her beloved husband's return, would she dream of loving him.

The squire (and here we have "Aberglaube invading") takes her at her word, gets a magician to weave magical spells, so that the rocks for a week or two appear to have vanished, and claims the fulfilment of her promise. At this juncture Arveragus returns, and when consulted, tells Dorigen sorrowfully that as she has promised, she must go with Aurelius. Weeping, she goes to keep her tryst, and Aurelius asks what has happened. Ultimately he refuses to accept a sacrifice made by one who conforms so surprisingly to the mediaeval idea of gentlehood. Chaucer rounds off the whole by making the magician (when Aurelius offers to pay him) emulate this altruism.

To us, how fearfully unreal! Aurelius was willing to compel Dorigen. Why then should he be moved by the husband? Only, if you are to look on the wife as

a chattel. Thus in Chaucer the flow of mediaeval manners, the prevailing conception, is constant, even when, as here, the ideal is that of mediaeval chivalry. The tale itself is very gently told, a pastorality at times that is infinitely taking:

> Upon the morwe, whan that it was day,
> To Britaigne toke they the righte way,
> Aurelius, and this magicien bisyde,
> And been descended ther they wolde abyde;
> And this was, as the bokes me remembre,
> The colde frosty seson of Decembre.

As charming is the passage—a childish not a child's simplicity—where Dorigen, longing for her husband's return, complains of the very existence of rocks.[10]

It must be said, with Mr. Pollard, that there is a blot on this exceedingly pretty story. Dorigen herself would prefer death to going with Aurelius, and she recites a catalogue, or set of short histories, of women who had died rather than be false to their ideal of chastity. This catalogue, though outspoken, is singularly dull. We have lost the fashion of Chaucer's defects as completely as the fashion of his merits.

No such blot disfigures the story of the "Prioress,"

[10] Gay may have had it in mind, "'Twas when the seas were roaring."

> How can they say that Nature
> Has nothing made in vain;
> Why then beneath the water
> Should hideous rocks remain?

A woman also is the speaker, longing for her unreturning lover; and the comparison with Chaucer's verses is interesting as showing the distinction between Chaucer's studied artlessness and ordinary art.

which disputes with the "Nun's Priest's Tale" the honour of being the narrative masterpiece among the tales not broadly comic. The story itself is not a good one, being founded on the mediaeval accusation against the Jews that they murdered Christian children, a certain libel, since no persecuted race takes pains to justify its persecutors. What happens is the contrary, the persecutors inventing justifications for their tyranny. The merit therefore is Chaucer's, and consists wholly in the telling—a masterpiece of naïvete—there is something ridiculously quaint in that. No doubt Time has increased this quaintness, and yet it is difficult to suppose that there was not a touch of slyness in the address—at once serious, benign, and droll, to the

> martir, souded to virginitee,

this martyr of seven year who is to walk in the selected companies of heaven with the Saints Anthony who have resisted temptation. For all this quaintness, or perhaps in part because of it, the story is a really pathetic and haunting thing—uplifting too:

> Wherefor I singe, and singe I moot certeyn
> In honour of that blisful mayden free,

a tale of faery with a kind of unearthly wind in it, mysterious and coming from tombs and flowers. I suppose, except Wordsworth with his "Michael," no other author has given the world at once a new narrative and a new atmosphere in two hundred lines. Such powers of occasional compression have the poets of prolixity.

Two fragmentary pieces complete the list of

the ostensibly romantic stories. The first—"Sir Thopas"—is intentionally left incomplete. One admires the art—a free use of the tediousness of minutiae—with which the fragment, though actually short enough to be read in five minutes, is purposely made to seem interminable. The good nature of the burlesque was noticed by Tyrwhitt. One does not love the air of the old romances less for this romantic skit upon them, a sympathetic satire like Synge's "Playboy," which at once laughs and increases liking. How much Chaucer loved that atmosphere can be seen from the "Squire's Tale." From the Franklin's words one is precluded from supposing, what otherwise one might have supposed, that it too was purposely left unfinished—

For fulsomnesse of his prolixitee,

left so in refined mockery of the never-ending "Tales of Faery."[1] But we need not dally with this supposition,

[1] Lydgate in his "Temple of Glas" seems to speak as if he had seen a completed copy of this Tale:

And uppermore men depeinten might see,
How, with her Ring, goodly Canace,
Of everie fowle the leden and the song
Could understand, as she hem walkt among;
And how her brother so often holpen was
In his mischefe, by the stede of Bras.

"That part of the Story which is hinted at in the two last lines is lost; which, however, might have been remaining in the age of Lydgate." (Warton, "Observations on the Fairy Queen of Spenser," second edition, 1762, vol. 1, p. 154.)

But, after all, if we are to trust to this for a proof that Chaucer finished the Tale, it is very deceptive, for Lydgate might know of the conclusion of the tale from the *source* from which Chaucer drew.

for a satire that has lain unsuspected for five hundred years would have been too ineffective for our author. We are shut up to accepting it as serious, and must assume, what is not remarkable, that Chaucer found space in his collection for one of the very stories at which in another humour he had laughed. Clearly, however, it could not be among the latest of Chaucer's compositions, being written perhaps some twenty years before "Sir Thopas."

Such as it is, the air of old romance in it caught the fancy of successive poets. Shakespeare may have remembered

> The norice of digestioun, the slepe,[2]

and

> Men loven of propre kinde newfangelnesse.[3]

We know Milton's reference, and the memory of Coleridge was caught—

> Toforn him gooth the loude minstralcye.[4]

For all that, the "Squire's Tale" is not easy reading to-day, much of it, as with most of Chaucer's earlier writings, was done as a task.

Task work, too, in great part must have been the "Doctor's Tale." Virginia's tragedy was not of the

[2] Cf. "Macbeth," Act 2, Sc. ii.:

> Great nature's second course
> Chief nourisher in life's feast.

[3] "Troilus and Cressida," Act 3, Sc. iii.:

> One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.

[4]

> Nodding their heads before her goes
> The merry minstrelsy.

kind to suit Chaucer's genius, which, whether pathetic or comic, was always domestical, and so he cuts the knot by not telling it. The strife in the soul of Virgina, the tragic passion of Appius, the martyrdom of Virginia—all these are reduced to one passage of a gentle and heartstirring pity, the father's address to his daughter and her sudden rush of gentle tears. The description of Virginia herself has a faint perfume in it:

> As well in goost as body chast was she;
> For which she floured in virginitee
> With alle humilitee and abstinence,
> With alle attemperaunce and pacience,
> With mesure eek of bering and array.
> Discreet she was in answering alway;
> Though she were wys as Pallas, dar I seyn,
> Hir facound eek ful wommanly and pleyn,
> No countrefeted termes hadde she
> To seme wys; but after hir degree
> She spak, and alle hir wordes more and lesse
> Souninge in vertu and in gentillesse.
> Shamfast she was in maydens shamfastnesse.

It appears that Virginia was so careful of her purity that at dances and revels and "occasions of daliaunces," she would feign to be ill, and on this the poet, for almost the only time in his life, at least as exhibited in his writings, launches forth into a moralising strain. It is important that the governors of youth should be careful of their charges. One sees that Chaucer feels strongly here:

> Of alle tresons sovereyn pestilence
> Is whan a wight bitrayseth innocence.

But he goes on in rather an oldish tone, the tone of the careful father, to apply this doctrine:

> Ye fadres and ye modres eek also,
> Though ye han children, be it oon or two,
> Your is the charge of al hir surveyaunce,
> Whyl that they been under your governaunce.
> Beth war that by ensample of your livinge,
> Or by your necligence in chastisinge,
> That they ne perisse; for I dar wel seye,
> If that they doon, ye shul it dere abeye.

What age was Chaucer when he spoke thus? It is idle to ask when the "Canterbury Tales" were written when the answer is that they were written during nearly the whole of Chaucer's life.

There are two tales that speak particularly of the author's personal feelings. As plain as it is from the "Summoner's Tale" that Chaucer was wise enough not to be gulled by monks, so plain is it from the "Canon's Yeoman's" that he did not believe in putting his money out at Alchemy. Had Cecilia's poet learnt by one sharp experience, or did the observer of the Wife of Bath happen to note the folly of a friend? For the credit of his wisdom I would wish to believe the latter, since the tone of personal complaint is recent, and if he was tricked, it was when he was nearer sixty than thirty, but I incline to believe the former, for the personal tone of the complaint is unmistakable. It is not uncommon for men of a sceptical temperament to be credulous in one strange particular. At any rate Chaucer's warning is a well and livelily told tale about a subject which does not now interest us at all. There

is no comedy, as in Jonson's "Alchemist," just an account of what happened, with the whole detail of the alchemical paraphernalia, an unusually intentive sight and an unusually retentive memory. Very probably the actual practiser was actually a Canon, for the poet is tediously precise in exempting Canons in general from the reflection of the Canon's misdeeds. When the story is finished the Canon's Yeoman goes on talking, an exhortation to those who may be thinking of trying *their* fortune. This is Chaucer's own voice no doubt, and the suggestion at the end that Alchemy is impious (as well as ruinous) is rather clever.

Personal feeling again is alive in the "Pardoner's Tale." So much was this so in the Preamble that Chaucer there for once forgot to be dramatic. Inside the tale itself there is a curious introduction, a strange outburst against drunkenness, gluttony, hazard or gaming. It is all in a very angry tone, and I cannot believe that Chaucer is speaking. What I suppose is that this was all to illustrate the character of the Pardoner, the hired swearer at cursed things. One knows the type, the outrageous preacher against vice who in the result gives any impression but that of virtue. May we believe that since the Preamble was wholly undramatic, the dramatic observer here tried again, and inserted a new and dramatic preamble in the body of the tale, a preamble that would be in character with the speaker and at the same time display his character. If so, and we may take the opening as a study of a very obvious form of hypocrisy, it is a

bitter and striking sketch, the most acrid thing in Chaucer, most acrid, most prolix, most impolite, so impolite indeed that it can hardly have been written, even by Chaucer, with a moral intention.

The tale itself opens with writing equally vivid, a picture of three rioters at an inn, to whom enters a frightened boy with a tale of how one of their companions had been caught by the pestilence or, in his exact language, had been slain by a "privee theef men clepeth Deeth." The drunkards take up his words, and, in a maudlin fury, go off to kill Death, whom they think of as a person. On the way they meet an old man, and furiously accost him. Why cumbers he the earth or why with so sorry a grace does he not hide his countenance from all men? Why does he live so long in so great age? Then comes that most astonishing passage, the thing described being one that you would have said the author of the "Prologue," with all its variety of never-ending living, had never seen:

> This olde man gan loke in his visage,
> And seyde thus, "for I ne can nat finde
> A man, though that I walked in-to Inde,
> Neither in citee nor in no village,
> That wolde chaunge his youthe for myn age;
> And therfore moot I han myn age stille,
> As longe time as it is goddes wille.
> Ne deeth, allas! ne wol nat han my lyf;
> Thus walke I, lyk a restelees caityf,
> And on the ground, which is my modres gate,
> I knokke with my staf, bothe erly and late,
> And seye, 'leve moder, leet me in!'"

At length the old man is to part from them, but they

say that, as he has spoken of Death, he must tell them where he dwells. His answer is given without preface: If they will follow the path he points out they will find him under a tree. The tale now moves swiftly and dramatically. Under the tree there is, of course, treasure, but, as it cannot be removed safely till night, one goes to the town for food and wine while the others keep guard. A third is less than a half, so that the two warders decide to murder their companion on his return. The absent man's thoughts run in the same direction. Such wine as he brings back is poisoned, and soon all have ended their search.

It is too high a flight of modern fancy to suppose that by the old man Chaucer means to personify Death, death that cannot die. There is indeed a sufficiently striking moral in the juxtaposition that is obvious—on the one hand, the insane errand, and on the other, the invention of this first struldbrug three hundred years before "Gulliver's Travels."

The "Pardoner's Tale" was certainly written late, and I like to entertain myself with the idea that the "Nun's Priest's Tale" was written later. Chaucer's story of a cock and fox would indeed have been a pleasing pleasantry with which to round off his observation of human things. The main plot is of the slightest; a cock dreams that a strange beast will devour him. Later in the morning a fox does actually carry him off in his mouth. The cock escapes by provoking the fox to speech. In the story there is nothing; the matter is in the burlesque grandiloquence

with which the story is told. The cock's crowing reminds Chaucer of the certainty of the great Horloge of the Abbey; the beauty of Dame Pertelote moves the former Court poet to rapture; before the magnificent Chanticleer you expect the "loude mynstralcye" to go. The disputation about the dreams, with the Schoolmen's reasoning on necessity, preserves this note of incongruity. The dreams quoted, all of human affairs —themselves the most skilful of introductions—keep the reader interested in his own life of accidents,

> But casuelly the shippes botme rente,

while the remarks on physical infirmities, the hen's female and practical advice that "all can be put right with Calomel," and the huge uproar about robbing a hen roost, all this is, by a side wind, to pooh-pooh the important business of humanity. Chanticleer and Dame Partlet, the lusty husband and the careful spouse, are but creatures infinitely amusing and infinitely little. We get the right perspective—the procession of pilgrims passes on with some dust and much chattering laughter, no invented episode, but a mere part of the unending comedy.

Of the very minor poems it is not necessary to say more than can be said in a note. Except for "Rosamond," a dainty frolic, exquisite in half-humorous art, they are all taken by all the editors to be the last. "Fortune," "Truth," "Gentilesse," the "Lak of Stedfastnesse" and "The Former Age"—these are all the old man's song. By themselves they would have given no poet lasting

reputation, but evidently they are the work of a considerable writer, and add something to our pleasant feeling of Chaucer:

A blisful lyf, a paisible and a swete
Ledden the peples in the former age;
They helde hem payed of fruites, that they ete,
Which that the feldes yave hem by usage;
They ne were nat forpampred with outrage;
Unknowen was the quern and eek the melle;
They eten mast, hawes, and swich pounage,
And dronken water of the colde welle.

The tone is old, grave, weighty, measured, unlike the other work of Chaucer, the leaves being brown and beginning to fall from the tree.

CHAPTER III

THE CHAUCER APOCRYPHA AND IMITATIONS.

Of the Chaucerian attributions the first and most probable is the existing English version of "The Romaunt of the Rose." What we have is incomplete and fragmentary. Of the 22,000 lines of the original less than 8000 are translated, nor is the fragment continuous. Broadly speaking, the first 5000 lines of French are translated, and then there is a gap for another 5000 lines, when the translation is taken up again for 2000 more. We have thus two fragments, which do not, however, correspond to the auctorial divisions of the original French. In the first English fragment there is contained the whole of what Guillaume de Lorris wrote, but also about 1000 lines of the continuation by Jean de Meun. The second fragment from Jean de Meun preserves a passage of peculiar interest in its day—the long discourse of Fals Semblant to the Lover, an attack on the monks and, as a whole, a rather daring discussion (veiled in pretended abhorrence) of the new views in religion.

Was Chaucer the author of this version or any part of it? We know that he did write an English version, that no other English version now exists, and that it

appeared in the first collected edition of Chaucer's works. Prima facie then it is Chaucer's, and was always so accepted before this age of scholarship. But now there is a disturbing philological argument. The second fragment, though rather weakly written, might philologically be by Chaucer. In the first fragment the first third is much more like Chaucer in point of literary style, but the last two-thirds bear marked evidences of the Northern dialect. It is to be assumed that Chaucer did not write them, not only because of the Northern forms, though that in itself is a strong argument, but because the translation has practically nothing of his charm. On the other hand, if we suppose the whole first fragment was not written by him, we have to account for the fact that the first 1700 lines are astonishingly in his manner, and betray little Northern influence. It is suggested that fragments of three several translations remain, but this is very unlikely, and Mr. Pollard's hypothesis that the whole was an early draft of Chaucer's, afterwards revised by him no further than the seventeen hundredth line, is perhaps as plausible as most. My own view is that in the first sixteen or seventeen hundred lines (after line 1608 the translation is not so lively) we have a very pleasant and easy running example of Chaucer's style in his youth.

The remaining fragments may be all that remains of what Chaucer first attempted when in the Countess of Ulster's household, when the Northern dialect was one he might naturally use, or they may be the work of

another man. It is not unlikely that Chaucer in translating "The Romance of the Rose" worked with a current English version beside him. On either assumption we see him here in his workshop learning his style and manner.

There is little trace of the coming humorous observer of "The Canterbury Tales," but very evidently there is the author of "The Book of the Duchesse." Indeed, the whole of the opening Chaucer is here.[1] At the same time it should be said that the translation is very close, and this opens a doubt, despite the occasional Chaucerisms, how much of the young Chaucer was native Chaucer and how much a part of the tradition:

Til that the dore of thilke entree
A mayden curteys opened me.
Hir heer was as yelowe of hewe
As any basin scoured newe.
Hir flesh tendre as is a chike,
With bente browes, smothe and slike;
And by mesure large were
The opening of her yën clere.

[1] For example:

These olde folke have alwey colde
Hir kind is swiche, whan they ben olde,

the *kind* of resigned reflection into which he constantly falls. Of another passage:

She semede lyk a rose newe
Of colour, and hir flesh so tendre,
That with a brere smale and slendre
Men mighte it cleve, I dar wel sayn,

one can only say it is very like Chaucer; there is no possible way in which one could characterise it more accurately.

Hir nose of good proporcioun,
Hir yën greye as a faucoun,
With swete breeth and wel savoured.
Hir face whyt and wel coloured,
With litel mouth, and round to see;
A clove chin eek hadde she.
Hir nekke was of good fasoun
In lengthe and gretnesse, by resoun,
Withoute bleynte, scabbe, or royne
Fro Jerusalem unto Burgoyne
Ther nis a fairer nekke, y-wis,
To fele how smothe and softe it is.
Hir throte, al-so whyt of hewe
As snow on braunche snowed newe.
Of body ful wel wrought was she
Men neded not, in no cuntree,
A fairer body for to seke.

As a probability this was written by Chaucer, but then also, as a certainty, it was written by Guillaume de Lorris. Like Shakespeare and Burns, Chaucer found the material for his love poetry ready to hand. The difference is that, with the exception of "The Romance of the Rose," the material was much less good.

The disappointing seventh volume of Dr. Skeat's edition, containing poems once attributed to Chaucer, has little poetical merit. Some of those poems belong to a later age, and are of no interest as illustrating Chaucer—false ascriptions merely, such as the pretty piece:

Alone walking, In thought pleyning,
And sore sighing, All desolate,
Me remembring, Of my living,
My deth wishing Bothe erly and late.

which for reasons both of philology and sentiment must

be placed much later. But there are pieces that might have been written by Chaucer, and if they are not poor efforts of his, are certainly of his time. There are, however, difficulties in supposing Chaucer wrote any of them.

"The Tale of Gamelyn," the tale substituted in some manuscripts for the lost "Cook's Tale," better lost some suppose, is a folktale of a younger son's physical prowess, and goes in a jaunty folk metre. The opening gives the tone:

> His bretheren loved wel here fader and of him were agast,
> The eldest deserved his fadres curs and had it at the last.

How such a poem ever came to be attributed to Chaucer is one of the puzzles of literary criticism. That it was found among his manuscripts or papers as a tale he intended to revise is perhaps probable. We should have to suppose that the same thing was here about to happen which we have supposed did actually happen with "The Romance of the Rose."[2] Equally possibly it was a popular story which was used merely to fill up a gap.

[2] No reasonable critic can suppose that the Second Prologue—"The Merry Adventures of the Pardonere and Tapstere," and "The Merchant's Second Tale" or "The History of Beryn" were written by Chaucer, and yet ultimately they got into the Collection. There is no difficulty in believing that "The Canterbury Tales" by their popularity attracted to them some apocryphal tales and stories that had also become popular. In eighteenth century editions it is quite common to find appended to Watts's "Divine and Moral Songs," "The Beggar's Petition" by Thomas Moss, and this without note of authorship. "Britain's Ida" was certainly not written by Spenser.

But there are other verses of which it is not so easy to speak positively—for example, a trifle, "Go forth, King," begins very much in Chaucer's manner, yet in the second verse, and there are only two, the metre runs all to pieces.

One reason for attributing a more serious effort, "The Complaint of the Black Knight," to someone else is that Shirley attributes it to Lydgate. A reason equally strong is that it is too poor for Chaucer's authorship. We may say of this tiresome performance that it is like Chaucer's style of writing, but altogether without his life. A pretty poem Chaucer might conceivably have written is "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale" or "The Book of Cupid, God of Love." Dr. Skeat found at the end of it, in one manuscript, the words "Explicit Clanvowe." Clanvowe was a family name, and Dr. Skeat supposed a Clanvowe to have written it about 1403. If it was written by Chaucer, it is odd it should open with a quotation from "The Knight's Tale."[3] The poem, though short, is too long, but the mediaeval love tone is prettily inserted:

> For every trewe gentil herte free
> That with him is, or thinketh for to be,
> Ageines May now shal have som steringe
> Other to joye, or elles to morninge,
> In no sesoun so greet, as thinketh me.

Wordsworth, whose success in translating Chaucer was not remarkable, manages in his close version of this poem to produce work assuredly of similar charm:

[3] "Knight's Tale," ll. 927-928.

For every true heart, gentle heart and free,
That with him is, or thinketh so to be,
Now against May shall have some stirring—whether
To joy, or be it to some mourning: never
In other time, methinks in like degree.

and this capture of the tone by Wordsworth is some proof that there is little of Chaucer's individuality in it.[4]

We come now to the "Court of Love." This is a poem which, as it stands, philologically could not have been written by Chaucer. If Chaucer wrote it, it has come down to us in a late transcription, the orthography and consequently the arrangement of the metre being modernised; and that is a large assumption. Professor Morley suggested that it is not more odd that a poem should have been thus dealt with than that some poems we know Chaucer to have written should have been wholly lost, but I confess I do not share this view. The poem, without the freshness of Chaucer, has a rather marked Chaucerian manner, and several Chaucerisms, though not more than could be accounted for by a desired archaism:

Sey as she seith, than shalt thou not be shent,
The crow is whyte; ye, truly, so I rede;
And ay what thing that she thee will forbede,
Eschew all that, and give her sovereintee.

[4] Curiously, one finds in the thirty-fifth verse the original of some famous lines in "The Leech Gatherer," a poem which was written a year after Wordsworth had made this translation:

For therof come all contraries to gladness!
Thence sickness comes, and overwhelming sadness,
Mistrust and jealousy, despite, debate,
Dishonour, shame, envy importunate,
Pride, anger, mischief, poverty, and madness.

Chaucer might have written this. On the other hand, there are phrases, tones, descriptions that cannot be Chaucer's.

> Goddes of love, and to thy *celsitude*

The tone in the following is too modern and too high:

> "Nay," quod Delyt, "love is a vertue clere,
> And from the soule his progress holdeth he."

The description of Rosiall's beauty is much too mathematical and part by part. One has but to compare the passage with the physical description of Blanche in "The Book of the Duchesse" to see the difference between a man saying something about everything, and a man meaning what he says. One is poetical describing, the other observation.

The chief interest of "The Court of Love" is in its subject. The poet feigns that when he was eighteen he was commanded to go to Love's Court, the Court of Venus and Cupid, a place presided over by Admetus and Alcestis, and there he is befriended by the Lady Philobone and falls in love with Rosiall. After the author has been introduced to the King, he is shown the statutes of the Court, statutes obviously modelled, if half playfully, on the manners enjoined by the actual "Courts of Love." Throughout the love romances of that age the highest importance was attached to secrecy:

> The secund statut, Secretly to kepe
> Councell of love, nat blowing everywhere.

and in the eleventh statute, the counsel to beware of spies reminds us of the absence of privacy in mediaeval domestic life.

Two poems which go together are "The Flower and the Leaf" and "The Assembly of Ladies." There are philological reasons against Chaucer's authorship of either, and Dr. Skeat even supposed they were written by the same authoress. That the author speaks in the person of a woman is no proof that he *was* a female. On the other hand, there is nothing to prove that the author was a male. To return to the contrary argument, we do not know of any woman of that epoch who could have written either.

The strongest argument against Chaucer's authorship of "The Flower and the Leaf" is that his authorship of "The Assembly of Ladies" is, from a literary standpoint, scarcely arguable:

> In Septembre, at the falling of the leef,
> The fresh sesoun was al-togider doon,
> And of the corn was gadered in the sheef;
> In a gardyn, about twayn after noon,
> Ther were ladyes walking, as was her wone,
> Foure in nombre, as to my mynd doth falle,
> And I the fifte, the simplest of hem alle.

This is extraordinarily pretty certainly, but it is not in the least like Chaucer.

"The Flower and the Leaf" has more virility. Purely on its literary merits it is not hard to believe in Chaucer's authorship, for we need not suppose that an author will always write on the level of his very best. But in its manner there are indications that whoever it was written by, it was written by somebody else. There is a gentle softness in the describing without Chaucer's stiffness behind the pretty, and there seem to me lines

characteristically feminine. The green ladies with their knights, after the rainstorm, collect twigs and boughs:

> Wherewith they made hem stately fyres grete
> To dry their clothës that were wringing wete.

In places there is an accuracy of naturalistic observation:

> The nightingale with so mery a note
> Answéred him, that al the wodë rong.

This is not the wistful bird of poetry and Keats, but rather Coleridge's:

> merry Nightingale
> That crowds, and hurries and precipitates
> With fast thick warble his delicious notes.

In another place colours are distinguished with a woman's eye:

> Every tree wel fro his felawe grew,
> With braunches brode, laden with leves new,
> That sprongen out ayein the sonnë shene,
> Som very rede, and som a glad light grene.

In a sonnet in which he rhymed robins with sobbings, but not otherwise remarkable, Keats expressed his admiration of this poem. As the sonnet was written by him on "the blank space of a leaf at the end of Chaucer's tale of 'The Flowre and the Lefe,'" we are precluded from supposing that his enthusiasm was due to a fresher memory of Dryden. Still, it is likely he had read Dryden, and he may have turned the pages of his Chaucer, prejudiced in favour of the Middle English poem by the extreme beauty of Dryden's verse. That Dryden surpassed his original is admitted even by Dr. Skeat, and it is difficult for anyone to think of the

Chaucerian version unaffected by the memory of Dryden's Fables.

To make a fair comparison:

> And than the company answéred all
> With voicë swete entuned and so small
> That me thought it the sweetest melody
> That ever I herdë in my lyf, soothly
>
> At every close she made, the attending throng
> Replied, and bore the burden of the song:
> So just, so small, yet in so sweet a note,
> It seemed the music melted in the throat.

The old Chaucerian version has a simple woodland air, earlier in manner than the version of Dryden, but there is also something incomplete and ineffective. It is not the accuracy of Keats' praise one disputes—"like a little copse"—but its enthusiastic tone, for it is to Dryden's masterpiece of delicacy that the poem owes its hold on the English literary imagination.

Indeed, Dryden, the first great poet to lend his genius to the task of translating Chaucer, has never received, for this peculiar work, adequate acknowledgment. His triumph of modernisation is "The Flower and the Leaf" where, though he sacrifices something of the simplicity of the original, he replaces it by a fairy delicacy. The two poems are different, but Dryden's is the more sufficient treatment of the theme. In "The Cock and the Fox" he reaches an excellence of another kind. There he modernises freely, but his effort is to produce, for a different time, a similar effect. One cannot say the result is Chaucer, but the poem is such as Chaucer might have written could we suppose him

to have lived in Dryden's day. What follows is by no means an exact translation of anything in the "Nonne Preestes Tale," but it catches Chaucer's ironical moral:

> Thus numbering times and seasons in his breast,
> His second crowing the third hour confessed:
> Then turning, said to Partlet,—"See, my dear,
> How lavish nature has adorned the year;
> How the pale primrose and blue violet spring,
> And birds essay their throats, disused to sing:
> All these are ours; and I with pleasure see
> Man strutting on two legs, and aping me!
> An unfledged creature, of a lumpish frame,
> Endued with fewer particles of flame:
> Our dame sits cowering o'er a kitchen fire,
> I draw fresh air, and nature's works admire:
> And, even this day, in more delight abound
> Than since I was an egg I ever found.

In another passage, closer to the original, Chaucer's humour is doubtless over-emphasised—again an eighteenth century Chaucer:

> Gaufride who couldst so well in rhyme complain
> The death of Richard, with an arrow slain,
> Why had not I thy muse, or thou my heart,
> To sing this heavy dirge with equal art!
> That I like thee of Friday might complain
> For on that day was Coeur de Lion slain.
> Not louder cries when Ilium was in flames,
> Were sent to heaven by woful Trojan dames,
> When Pyrrhus tossed on high his burnished blade,
> And offered Priam to his father's shade
> Than for the cock the widow'd poultry made.

Yet here also Dryden, for a different age and by a different manner, expresses perfectly the meaning of Chaucer's tale.

In "The Knight's Tale" he is not equally successful. The long-windedness of Chaucer's narrative, which is part of its ambling charm, is altogether lost in the superiority of technique. Dryden builds the whole thing together, and the result is a composition much stiffer than Chaucer's, and by no means to be put by the side of it. Still, for itself, it is not unworthy of Dryden's powers. Where he obviously cannot better, he is content to copy down:

> With arms of proof, both for myself and thee;
> Choose thou the best, and leave the worst to me.

In other places he paraphrases freely, but sometimes the paraphrase is magnificent:

> The Cause and spring of motion, from above,
> Hung down on earth the golden chain of love:
> Great was th' effect, and high was his intent,
> When peace among the jarring seeds he sent;
> Fire, flood, and earth, and air, by this were bound,
> And love, the common link, the new creation crowned.
> The chain still holds; for though the forms decay,
> Eternal matter never wears away:
> The same first Mover certain bounds has placed,
> How long these perishable forms shall last;
> Nor can they last beyond the time assign'd
> By that all-seeing and all-making Mind:
> Shorten their hours they may; for will is free;
> But never pass the appointed destiny.
> So men oppress'd, when weary of their breath,
> Throw off the burden, and suborn their death.
> Then since those forms begin and have their end,
> On some unaltered cause they sure depend:
> Parts of the whole are we; but God the whole,
> Who gives us life and animating soul.

For nature cannot from a part derive
That being, which the whole can only give:
He perfect, stable; but imperfect we,
Subject to change, and different in degree;
Plants, beasts and men, and as our organs are,
We more or less of his perfection share.
But by a long descent, th' etherial fire
Corrupts; and forms, the mortal part, expire:
As he withdraws his virtue, so they pass,
And the same matter makes another mass.
This law the omniscient Power was pleased to give
That every kind should by succession live:
That individuals die, his will ordains;
The propagated species still remains.
The monarch oak, the patriarch of the trees,
Shoots rising up, and spreads by slow degrees;
Three centuries he grows, and three he stays
Supreme in state, and in three more decays;
So wears the paving pebble in the street,
And towns and towers their fatal periods meet;
So rivers, rapid once, now naked lie,
Forsaken of their springs, and leave their channels dry.

In the "Wife of Bath's Tale" there is too much urbanisation. The early part is a story as well told as was usual with Dryden, but the tone of Chaucer is missed. It is the weakest of Dryden's versions, though better than any of Pope's, where this fault of missing the tone is peculiarly apparent. Good as Pope's versions are, considered merely as tales, they have nothing of Chaucer in them—productions of a different genre. Dryden's success was wholly peculiar, arising, as he himself suggested, from there being something akin in the genius of the two poets. In both there was a similar flow, a similar moral easiness, a similar good

sensible knowledge of the world. His versions therefore, though not perfect, for no great writer can be transliterated, are versions, they are not wholly distinct. A kindred fancy was fired, and he delighted in the work. "Besides 'The Knight's Tale,'" says Dryden in his preface, "there is another of his own invention, after the manner of the Provençal, called 'The Flower and the Leaf,' with which I was so particularly pleased, both for the invention and the moral, that I cannot hinder myself from recommending it to the reader."

One does not find this delight in Wordsworth's versions. The most successful is the weakest in poetry, "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale,"[5] a piece that both in the original and in Wordsworth is low pitched. Here Wordsworth is at least as good as his original, but then neither his poem nor his original has more than gentle grace. In other places, as in his scrap from "Troilus and Cressida" and in his version of "The Prioress's Tale," he is content with little more than modernising the language. Yet it is curious how the flavour escapes. Wordsworth took great pains with his tale of the Murdered Child; he was a poet of simplicity and his heart was touched. But he does not reproduce Chaucer's simpleton tone. In Wordsworth there was nothing of the sly. The simplicity of Chaucer is a conscious and desired simplicity, the innocence is not that of an innocent man. It is altogether different from the naturalism of Words-

[5] As to the authenticity of this poem see p. 122.

worth, and Wordsworth cannot acquire it. In the tale of the Prioress one feels Chaucer is making himself small. The whole secret of the delight is in the speaking small—the taking of the innocent attitude. In Wordsworth's version there is hardly any alteration, and yet somehow it is the sober language of middle age. The charm, slight as are the alterations,—the charm of a sympathetic pitiableness has vanished. One is entitled to suggest that Wordsworth's entirely successful translation of "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale" is additional evidence of the Chaucerian spuriousness of that production.

It is not necessary to say more than a word on the occasional experiments in bastard Chaucerianisation, if they can so be called, made by Chatterton. He had nothing of the spirit of Chaucer, nor did he come under his influence. Spenser it was who was his master, and it was Spenser whose charm took the fancy of the boy. It is only Chatterton's language, not his tone, that is occasionally Chaucerian, and it is doubtful if he had done more than glance at Chaucer's text.

Here are some verses from the Rowley Poems addressed to John Ladgate:

> Well thanne, goode Johne, sythe ytt must needes be soe,
> Thatt thou and I a bowtynge matche must have,
> Lette ytt ne breakynge of oulde friendshyppe bee,
> Thys ys the onelie all-a-boone I crave.
>
> Rememberr Stowe, the Bryghtstowe Carmalyte,
> Who whanne John Clarkynge, one of myckle lore,
> Dydd throwe hys gauntlette-penne, wyth hym to fyghte,
> Hee showd smalle wytte, and showd hys weaknesse more.

Thys ys mie formance, whyche I nowe have wrytte,
The best performance of mie lyttel wytte.

But it is not worth while to consider this as Chaucerising.

A later and curious experiment is Mr. Swinburne's "St. Dorothy." Mr. Swinburne, the most accomplished of metrists, experimented in more metres than styles, for in substance he was never an imitator. Everything he wrote was peculiarly his, and has his quality, not another's. Neverthless, just as Morris in "The Defence of Guenevere" gives us something which, though it cannot be mistaken for mediaeval writing, opens a window on the romance of the Middle Age, so Mr. Swinburne in his "St. Dorothy," without producing anything in the least resembling Chaucer, captures a touch of the old naïveté. The story from "The Golden Legend" which he used, was one of the passion of a Roman Provost for a Christian Maid vowed to virginity. On her refusal of his suit he subjects her to innumerable ineffectual tortures, their frustration witnessing the interposition of Heaven. At last her head is commanded to be struck off, and as the Saint, about to die, describes the Heavenly Land with the ever-flowering trees, a scribe, Theophilus, who is standing near, mocks at her. As a rebuke to his incredulity, there appears to him, after her death, and though the time was winter, a heavenly messenger with a basket of roses.

Mr. Swinburne's version adds some Swinburnian cruelty to this tale. In his poem Theophilus appears

a person detestable beyond words, a lover whose love—though that is not the name of his passion—turned to hate.[6]

Yet in places in this queer poem there are touches not wholly alien to the narrative style of Chaucer, as if the author were speaking of what he had seen:

> This Theophile that little hereof wote
> Laid wait to hear of her what she might be:
> Men told him she had name of Dorothy,
> And was a lady of a worthy house.
> Thereat this Knight grew inly glorious
> That he should have a love so fair of place.
> She was a maiden of most quiet face,
> Tender of speech, and had no hardihood
> But was nigh feeble of her fearful blood;
> Her mercy in her was so marvellous
> From her least years, that seeing her school-fellows
> That read beside her stricken with a rod,
> She would cry sore and say some word to God
> That he would ease her fellow of his pain.
> There is no touch of sun or fallen rain
> That ever fell on a more gracious thing.
> In middle Rome there was in stone-working
> The church of Venus painted royally.
> The chapels of it were some two or three,
> In each of them her tabernacle was
> And a wide window of six feet in glass
> Coloured with all her works in red and gold.
> The altars had bright cloths and cups to hold
> The wine of Venus for the services,
> Made out of honey and crushed wood-berries

[6] Massinger and Dekker have also altered with freedom in their "Virgin Martyr," but they preserve this much of the decency of the original story—that Theophilus is not the lover.

That shed sweet yellow through the thick wet red.
That on high days was borne upon the head
Of Venus' Priest for any man to drink.

Here we have the same kind of contribution to Chaucerising that in "Atalanta in Calydon" we have to Grecising. "Atalanta" is not properly, in spirit, a Greek play. There is too much pleasure in the cruelty and impiety, and yet one catches from it, better than from some laborious translations, something of the flame. In the same way here, the poet, without imitating, interprets. More than that we cannot ask from a later day. It is never possible, when the flavour of his own times has departed, to repeat a great man. In so far as he was great, he reflected, with his own poetical variation, what of his time and day his poetical genius could reflect, and consequently those who write most like him, at least in spirit, will be nearest his contemporaries. Fairfax and the Fletchers are nearer to the tone of Spenser than the eighteenth century imitators, and the best Chaucerising is afforded by the delicate unoriginal talent of King James or by the imitative Henryson.

Not that "The Kingis Quair" can be mistaken for an actual composition of Chaucer's. It has nothing of the professional author, and, whether written by King James or not, was clearly written by, or for, a noble personage, a poem that had to be made consonant with princeliness, and breathing of that character. What is proper to be said by way of tribute to the lady, that alone is said, and the writer does not forget his station in the interests

of an artist's particularity. But it was not only written for a gentleman, its native grace bespeaks it as from one to manners born. Its sentiment is as gentle as its speech, so much so that one attributes it unbelievingly to the subsequently ruthless James:

> Quhen as I lay in bed allone waking,
> New partit out of slepe a lyte tofore.

With this exception—the poet's own gentleness—the whole performance is learnt. The captive's seeing the lady walking in the garden, his starts[7] and his reflections,[8] these are from Palamon. What is said of the inhabitants of the Sphere of Love is a variation from Chaucer's comments on "The Hous of Fame," before the account proceeds to borrow from "The Romance of the Rose." There are reflections on Necessity, and even a friendly reference to "The Nun's Priest's Tale."[9]

Yet all this might well be without the tone of Chaucer being caught. It is, however, of additional interest that it is caught, sometimes perfectly:

> So thik the bewis and the leues grene
> Beschadit all the aleyes that there were,
> And myddis euery herbere myght be sene
> The scharpë grenë suetë jenepere.

---

[7] For quhich sodayne abate, anon astert
The blude of all my body to my hert.

[8] Than gan I studye in my-self, and seyne,
A! suete are ze a warldly creature,
Or hevinly thing in liknesse of nature.

[9] The wyly fox, the wedowis inemye.

And if this is Chaucer at his gentlest, here are two lines that might have come almost anywhere in the earlier Court poetry:

> In her was 3outh, beautee, with humble aport,
> Bountee, richesse, and wommanly facture.

In the following the manner is of Chaucer's later pieces:

> Say on than, Quhare is becummyn for schame!
> The songis new, the fresch carolis and dance,
> The lusty lyf, the mony change of game,
> The fresche array, the lusty contenance,
> The besy awayte, the hertly obseruance.

where the movement of the fifth line is exactly Chaucerian. Towards the end there is a catalogue of beasts, and the picture of

> The lytill squerell, full of besynesse

not only formally, but for its manner of recorded observation, might have stept straight out of "The Parlement of Foules." But one need not further prove the obvious:

> Quhare, in a lusty plane, tuke I my way,
> Endlang a ryuer, plesant to behold,
> Embroudin all with freschë flouris gay,
> Quhare, throu the grauel, bryght as ony gold,
> The cristall water ran so clere and cold,
> That in myn erë maid contynualy,
> A maner soune, mellit with armony.

These verses were perhaps written before, perhaps in 1425, the year commonly selected for the birth of Robert Henryson, whose poems may therefore be taken as from thirty to fifty years later in date.

A writer of more various genius, Henryson is chiefly remembered for "Robene and Makyne," an unromantic and taking pastoral, entirely individual; "The Testament of Cresseid," a pious but not un-Chaucerian supplement to "Troilus and Cressida," in which, however, the moral attitude is not Chaucer's; and some animal fables wherein the dispositions of the beasts are in the main cleverly preserved. Henryson's poems have a faint but definitely individual note. Goodness quite genuine but a little unvaried, humour, in the main to fill the page, a rather made humour, and a gravity that, if it does not deserve the adjective benign, is grave—these are not the salient characteristics of Chaucer. Some of Henryson's happiest hits—"Robene and Makyne," "The Garmond of Gude Ladeis," "The Abbay Walk," full of his own piety—are the furthest from Chaucerisings; but it need not be said that one is constantly conscious that one is reading an imitator, more than once one who is openly so. There is even a second version of "The Nun's Priest's Tale." The many widows accept the rape of Chanticleer with more philosophy than Dame Partlet, and find mutual consolation in communings on the shortcomings of their recent spouse:

> He wes angrie and held us ay in aw.

But it is in the episodical and complaining reflections scattered throughout that we seem most to hear Chaucer's voice. These are in an oldish tone, like some of Chaucer's pieces, his short and last:

O! man of law! let be that subteltie,
With nyce gimpis, and fraudis intricate;
And think that God in his divinitie
The wrang, the rycht, of all thy werkis wait.
For prayer, price, for hie nor law estait,
Of fals querrellis se thow mak na defence;
Hald with the rycht, hurt not thy conscience.

On occasion, too, where the work is merely pedestrian, there is an astonishing resemblance to the level of Chaucer's narrative, as in the Prologue to the Fables:

O Maister Esope, poet laureate,
God wait ye ar full deir welcum to me;
Ar ye nocht he that all thir Fabillis wrait,
Quhilk in effect, suppois thay fenyeit be,
Ar full of prudence and moralitie?
"Fair sone," said he, "I am the samin man."
God wait gif that my hert wes merie than.

Yet in the main Henryson is not Chaucer. One does not feel that one is reading Chaucer, and for the sufficient reason that one knows one is reading Henryson.

The more considerable a poet is, the less likely is it that there should be repetition, and if we admit that the greatest of Middle Scots poets, Dunbar, was formally indebted to Chaucer, it is with the caveat that there is literally nothing similar in the genius of the writers. Death is not more akin to Life than the sombre Scots clerk to the easy Englishman. With the attitude of priests and Swift to the desires of the body, this despising Sensualist is perpetually conscious of the skeleton at the board. Totally without understanding of love, which he identifies with a concession to the

flesh, there is no poet with a deeper understanding of life's vanity, and if this is all he has to say to us, he says it to us in verses that are like the tolling of a cathedral bell. He had studied Chaucer doubtless, but it is a mere scholar's exercise to point to rare lines that might have been written by the older poet.[10] To speak accurately, it is a tribute to Dunbar's versatility that he could on occasion write like Chaucer in his age:

> Be mirry, man! and tak nocht far in mynd
> The wawering of this wrechit warld of sorrow;
> To God be humil, and to thy freynd be kynd,
> And with thy nychtbouris glaidly len and borrow;
> His chance to nycht it may be thyne to morrow,
> Be blyth in hairt for ony aventure,
> For oft with wysmen hes bene said aforrow,
> Without glaidnes awailis no tressour.

for even here the tone is different. The outlook is more considering and Scotch, the counsel closer to life's verities, less literary, deeper than is common with the Southerner.

[10] It is nothing to the purpose that he occasionally uses Chaucer's metres; in "The Thistle and the Rose" and others, the rhyme-royal of Chaucer's "Complaint of the Dethe of Pité," the metre also of "The Kingis Quair": and in "The Golden Targe" that of "Feire Anelida and False Arcite." He was a metrist highly original, and his metres commonly are un-Chaucerian.

CHAPTER IV

SPENSER'S LIFE

THOUGH the "Faerie Queene" was contemplated before Spenser settled in Ireland, it was in a country distracted with constant strife that it was written. This poetry in which is all the "deliciousness of the earth," "when she makes her bed smoothest, when her outline is softest,"[1] was composed not by a recluse in a Pacific island, but by a spectator of misery. The composition of so long a work extended over a long period of years. We have not, therefore, to explain how Spenser could so write at a moment of sudden crisis, and it is a commonplace of literary history, if there is no other contrast as sharp as this, that most of the great poetry of Beauty was written as a relief. That the contrast was as sharp as it was is of advantage to us. The altogether exceptional circumstances of Spenser's life in Ireland supply his poem with a fibre of steel, a thin fibre, but more than one finds elsewhere in the literature of Beauty, much more than we should find in a poetry of this character written in luxurious ease.

I mean this for a statement sufficiently careful to dissociate myself from those critics who make other

[1] "Poets and Poetry" by John Bailey, "Spenser," p. 49.

claims for the "Faerie Queene," who say that it is primarily a chivalric poem in which have been inserted beautiful passages, or with Dean Church that "it might almost be called the Epic of the English wars in Ireland under Elizabeth." To approach the poem so is to get the wrong perspective. It belongs, as much as any great poem can belong, to the School of Beauty, and is saved from the flaccidity attendant on the usual productions of that school only by Spenser's contact with the strenuous. And it is evidence of this that such strengthening as there is, is supplied by actualities. When Spenser imagines, he imagines beautiful things, love-making, pleasant rivers, Spring. His poetical dream is not of conduct but of delight. That it was not an amorphous dream was no doubt owing to his experience. But though it owes its fibre, it does not owe its being to that.

We discover from one of the sonnets in "Amoretti" that Spenser was born about 1552, and from the "Prothalamion" that he was a Londoner. The son of John Spenser, a free journeyman of the Merchant Taylors Company, he was assisted in his education both at the Merchant Taylors School and afterwards at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. He was poor,[2] but he persistently put forward both a general claim to gentle lineage and a particular claim to kinship with the Spensers of Althorpe. Leaving Cambridge when he was twenty-four with a degree but without a fellowship,

[2] "Poorly—poore man—he liv'd; poorly—poore man—he di'd." Phineas Fletcher, "Purple Island," Canto I., v. 19.

Spenser was introduced by his College friend, Gabriel Harvey, to Sidney and Leicester. "The Shepheardes Calender" appeared in 1579. By this time there was Rosalind, a name that perhaps stood for several, as Harvey warns him a little later against another "Rosalindula." By this time also he was profuse as an author. Taking the separate references together, we may conclude that by 1580 he was the author of some thirty poetical productions, which, in their original, have not survived. Parts of them may exist in the works that appeared subsequently, the more probably that some of the existing "Complaints" are indisputably early work. His talent was of the kind to flourish soon. By instinct an artificer in words, from his earliest manhood he was a practiser. "The Shepheardes Calender" is the work of a finished craftsman.

In August, 1580, Spenser, as secretary to Lord Grey, left for Ireland, a country in which he was to spend eighteen years. If we suppose that his poetical life began when he was sixteen, he had thirty years of it, and if we discount his very earliest writings as trial pieces, he was not engaged for more than twenty-five in the writing of memorable poetry. At least three-quarters of his active poetical life then was passed in Ireland.

Lord Grey was in Ireland for but two years, his costly policy of severity bringing no return large or early enough to please the Home Government. Biography on the whole deals gently with Lord Grey, and is prepared, with qualifications, to accept Spenser's

estimate of him as a man not naturally fierce but favouring fierceness as a policy. We must accept either some such estimate or else a natural tyrant as Spenser's idol. Taking things even so, however, it is not improbable that Spenser was attendant on the expedition responsible for the massacre of Smerwick, and saw things that it is good for man not to witness. The task Lord Grey set to himself in Ireland was to crush Desmond's rebellion. Recalled before his specific purpose was accomplished, he left it to be completed later by Ormond. Meanwhile there followed a long period of half peace, Sir John Perrot succeeding and governing with comparative clemency.

During these years Spenser was a subordinate official of the English Government, receiving successively, in recognition of his services, various small offices and grants, among others, possibly as early as 1587, that of Kilcolman Castle, in the County of Cork, with three thousand acres adjoining. Kilcolman was "a small peel tower with cramped and dark rooms," a gentleman's house made for defence, standing amidst scenery much praised by the idealising poet, but, according to the guide book, really in "an extremely dreary tract of country." Becoming in no long time an insecure residence, at first it furnished a lodge for retirement, and it was here that Spenser entertained his old acquaintance Raleigh before going with him to London to arrange for the publication of the first part of "The Faerie Queene." But the now acknowledged poet of England was disappointed in his hopes of Court prefer-

ment, his solatium of a pension of £50 falling almost satirically short of his cherished ambitions. In about two years he is back in Kilcolman to watch Tyrone's rebellion becoming formidable in 1594, (the date of his marriage with Elizabeth Boyle,) and by 1598 spreading to the borders of Munster. In the same year, following the English defeat at Armagh, Kilcolman was burned, and Spenser driven out to die in London in January, 1599.

"An English home in Ireland however fair," says Dean Church, "was a home on the sides of Aetna or Vesuvius." Kilcolman was not a specially fair home, but it was specially dangerously situated. Arlo Hill was Galtymore, the summit of the Galtee range, and its "fair forests" the harbour of "thieves and wolves." Such was the house where were written the second part of "The Faerie Queene" and "A View of the State of Ireland."

Though not published till posthumously in 1633, a manuscript copy of "A View of the State of Ireland" is preserved among the Irish papers of 1598. And it is reasonable to entertain the supposition that it was lodged officially in 1596,[3] when Spenser was in London arranging for the publication of the second part of "The Faerie Queene." This treatise, long and in perfunctory dialogue form, is curiously readable. Its prescription is unhesitating severity, the worst evil to

[3] In one passage in the text the year 1595 is referred to as "this last year." "English Prose Selections," vol. 1, p. 454. I have not found the reference, but J. W. Hales is my authority.

be feared being a chopping between two policies; but the tone is the reverse of inhuman; on the contrary, pleasant and easy. The Irish, one may judge, were not thought of in those days as beings with ordinary sympathies, and one has to be on one's guard to realise the true nature of measures suggested with so smooth a gravity. To a strange degree it is written in the tone of the unbiased observer. Appreciation of the charms of the island's scenery, disinterested interest in antiquities of law, custom and anthropology, digressions long and innumerable, mingle oddly with the political advice. We may gather incidentally from the tone of his reference that Spenser took Chaucer's "Sir Thopas" seriously, and he has a patronising and critically banal remark on the Celtic poets. "I have caused divers of them," he writes, "to be translated unto me that I might understand them; and surely they savoured of sweet wit and good invention, but skilled not of the 'goodly ornaments of poetry," a sentence in which the finished artist laments the absence of qualities which he did not know are not to be found in primitive literature.[4]

On the side of politics his ideas are touchingly plain—"all these evills must first be cut away by a strong hand before any good can bee planted," and so he excuses the Smerwick massacre, speaks of the English in Ireland as descending to the "meere Irish," approves of ordinances controlling husbandry, would have a Provost-Marshal as well as a Sheriff in every shire,

[4] Cp. Sidney on the Ballads in the "Defense."

favours the gradual though persuasive Protestantising of the Catholics, and would forbid them the use of foreign Catholic Universities as "Rheims, Douai, Louvain and the like," would have tenants rented on their improvements, and would plant soldiers in the country. On the other hand, he would not prohibit meetings altogether, for it is needful "for the countryes to gather together when there is any imposition to be laide upon them." Nor are men to be executed indiscriminately by martial law, "for in the last generall warres there, I knew many good free-holders executed by martiall law, whose landes were thereby saved to their heires, which should have otherwise escheated to her Majestie." Amid sentences so quaintly harsh, there are discussions on the meaning of the word Pale, on Foster-Mothers, on the original ancestors of the Irish, and descriptions of the sweetness of the countryside or the sometimes desperate condition of the people.

Yet, where severity is in question, allowance must always be made for the influence of fear, and in the long passage dealing with the Irish blanket and its uses for concealing the face and keeping its owner warm when pursued to the hills, or in such sentences as the following, one realises how Spenser felt himself to be living in an outlaw land, where any danger might lurk unseen:

"And first I wish that order were taken for the cutting and opening of all places through woods, so that a wide way of the space of 100 yards might be layde open in every of them for the safety of

travellers, which use often in such perillous places to be robbed, and sometimes murdered. Next that bridges were built upon the rivers, and all the fords marred and split, so as none might passe any other way but by those bridges, and every bridge to have a gate and a gatehouse thereon : whereof this good will come that no night stealths, which are commonly driven in by-wayes and by blinde fordes unused of any but such like, shall not be conveyed out of one country into another."

Situated so, it was impossible for the most inveterate dreamer not to dream of the strong arm of the law. Spenser loved beauty, but one cannot read "The Faerie Queene" without realising that he respected the man of action and that quality of soul which, in the words of Dean Church, "frankly accepts the conditions in human life, of labour, of obedience, of effort, of unequal success, which does not quarrel with them or evade them, but takes for granted with unquestioning alacrity that man is called—by his call to high aims and destiny —to a continual struggle with difficulty, with pain, with evil." Spenser's temperament was that of the artist, but the circumstances of his manhood were such that he was not a mere artist. It is certain that his nature finally was distinct from "the nature which shrinks from difficulty, which is appalled at effort, which has no thought of making an impression on things around it, which is content with passively receiving influences and distinguishing between emotions, which feels no call to exert itself, because it recognises no aim valuable enough to rouse it, and no obligation strong enough to

command it." The poet understood the soldier, nay, was himself proficient in the soldierly virtues of courage and loyalty. What pleased him wholly was the character of the English gentleman, then just emerging as a national type, a character, to quote Dean Church again, "that however ready for adventure and battle, looked to peace, refinement, order, and law, as the true conditions of its perfection."

Wherever, then, Spenser has to speak of active things his poetry is not mere artistry. But that his temperament was essentially the artist's we see from this that, wherever he has not, where he is occupied with observation of moral qualities, for instance, his attitude is singly artistic. Martial contact modified the artist in him. It is in his early poems, therefore, before this contact has been set up, that we see best the natural bias of his genius.

In theology, Spenser was influenced by his surroundings from the first. At the Merchant Taylors School, Grindal, the chief of the moderate Puritans, was a visitor. Grindal, who became successively Archbishop of York and Canterbury, was no extreme sectary, a member of that party which, while willing to go some length in Puritan belief, accepted the attitude of the Church of the day as perhaps the surest bulwark against Rome. To this same party belonged Alexander Nowell, the brother of Robert Nowell, Spenser's early benefactor. Spenser himself was a Protestant, and by matter of course anti-Roman, but his theological adherences did not demand from him any Puritan austerities

of conduct. He was brought up in this religion, and to this religion he adhered, as one might adhere conscientiously to one's family's political opinions.

In politics the influence of early associations is also marked. Leicester was the princely leader of the Puritans, Sidney, Leicester's nephew, an anti-Roman who feared the power of Spain, and at one time it was thought possible that a marriage between the Queen and Leicester might consolidate the fortunes both of the anti-Spanish and the anti-Roman party. When "Mother Hubberd's Tale" in its first draft was written or when it was revised we cannot say with precision, but in its first form it was certainly of the early London period. "Virgil's Gnat," published in 1591, but expressed to be "long since dedicated to the most noble and excellent Lord the Earle of Leicester late deceased,"[5] is prefaced by a sonnet in which Spenser evidently refers to some offence he had given Leicester when he had been meaning to serve him as the Gnat served the Shepherd. It has been suggested that this offence was the "trop de zele" of "Mother Hubberd." The volume of "Complaints," which ends with "Muiopotmos" and some early poems, opens with the "Ruines of Time," "The Teares of the Muses," "Virgil's Gnat," and "Mother Hubberd's Tale" in that order. In all four poems there are obvious references to Leicester and Sidney, and it is likely, from the juxtaposition alone, that "Virgil's Gnat" was a kind of preface to the refurbished "Mother Hubberd." If it

[5] Leicester died in 1588.

was so, the further conjecture that "Mother Hubberd's Tale" may originally have been a protest in Leicester's interest against foreign influences at Court and the contemplated foreign marriage of the Queen, is almost irresistible. In any case the poem, with its attacks on the corrupt clergy, was written in the interests of one tenet of Leicester's party, and if, further, it contained a veiled attack on Burleigh, who favoured foreign influences, Leicester may easily have thought his young adherent indiscreet. The interest of the discussion extends beyond the misunderstanding with Leicester. Spenser's English politics were the politics of his patrons, of his party too, truly, but of his patrons also, just as we have seen was the case with his Irish politics and Lord Grey.

Of Gabriel Harvey, who is always mentioned with Spenser and whose influence began to be exercised at Cambridge, it is here only necessary to say that he appears in Spenser's life both as a Puritan and as a literary adviser. In so far as his influence was Puritan, it was more Puritan than that of the conforming Puritans in the Church. There was something, amid his affectedly scholarly phrases, of the scholar's austerity in Harvey. "Credit me," he writes to Spenser on one occasion, "I will never lin baiting at you till I have rid you quite of this yonkerly and womanly humour."

As a literary critic his advices were less valuable. He was afraid of the Gothicness of "The Faerie Queene," and constantly attempted to direct Spenser's genius into classical channels. But the current proved

too strong for him, and he had the grace to acknowledge the merits of the masterpiece when it appeared. It was not according to his rules, but it was good. For the rest, why should we continue to say that those well-meant counsels resulted at any time deleteriously? Harvey had a taste for classical experiments in quantitative verse, and it is thought a shocking thing that Spenser should have devoted a few hours or days to experiments opposed both to his own genius and the genius of English. But what has suffered? not melody or metrical ease. On the contrary, to a master of metre every little side experiment has its use. The few verses in quantity which Spenser has left have been much derided, but, to me, what is remarkable is how, even in these trifles, Spenser persists.[6] I do not say they are all good, but they are full of Spenser's feeling, and the picture in the second verse,

> Playing alone carelesse on hir heavenlie Virginals,

is the picture he is always painting for us—the picture of soft peace.

[6] This passage was written before I had had the advantage of reading Mr. Yeats's essay, otherwise I would have contented myself with the final authority of the poet.

CHAPTER V

SPENSER

If an extremely probable conjecture is well founded, the first things we have of Spenser's are some translations of Petrarch, and Bellay, the prefatory poetry to a treatise of John van der Noodt's translated into English in 1569. These, if they were Spenser's, were the anonymous work of a boy in his seventeenth year, and that they were his there is strong presumptive evidence in the fact that, some time after, he revised them, for in 1590 his publisher, Ponsonby, printed the two series of sonnets in their revised form as his. When they were revised we do not know, but, whenever they were revised, it was by one who was already master of his craft, so much so that the first verse of the revised issue may be taken as the type and symbol of his versification:

> It was the time, when rest soft sliding downe.

In the original the smoothness was only in the idea:

> It was the time when rest the gift of Gods
> Sweetely sliding into the eyes of men.[1]

[1] Cf. "On the morning of Christ's nativity."

> Sent down the meek eyed peace,
> She crowned with olive green came softly sliding.

The theme is that familiar to Spenser throughout life, the theme of the world's vanity—Mutability; and already, in these early and, for Spenser, comparatively toneless translations, we can mark his fondness for the music of water:

> There was to heare a noise alluring slepe
> Of many accordes more swete than Mermaids song,

as well as his fancy of accordant voices, where he speaks of many Muses and the Nymphs,

> That sweetely in accorde did tune their voice
> Unto the gentle sounding of the waters fall.[2]

Two other early poems are the "Ruines of Rome" from Bellay, and the "Visions of the World's Vanitie."

The "Ruines of Rome" consists of thirty-three sonnets remarking on the decay of grandeur and the mutability of things:

> I say not, as the common voyce doth say,
> That all things which beneath the Moone haue being
> Are temporall, and subject to decay:
> But I say rather, though not all agreeing
> With some, that weene the contrarie in thought;
> That all this whole shall one day come to nought.

[2] In the re-issue both of those are touched with a transmuting hand:

> And there a noyse alluring sleepe soft trembled,
> Of manie accords more sweete than Mermaids song.

and

> That sweetly in accord did tune their voyce
> To the soft sounding of the waters fall.

This fondness of Spenser's was remarked very early. Cf. "Returne from Parnassus" (1601):

> While to the waters fall he turned, for fame,
> And in each barke engrav'd Elizae's name.

the meaning for once being clouded by the needless qualification.

Incidentally, in these verses bewailing departed greatness, in the middle of a sonnet testifying to the former might of Rome, there is as mouth-filling a line as ever held open the lips of the elocutionist:

Rome was th' whole world, and al the world was *Rome*.

an instance of what used to be called vowelisation.

For the rest, the collection is very early work, tremendously wordy, and, though this may be attributable partly to Bellay, such was the common fault of the young Spenser. It is a poem without substance of sense, just talk round about one idea.

The "Visions of the World's Vanitie" is an excursus on a similar theme. In this series of sonnets what is admired is that the greatest things may be brought to disaster by quite little things, an elephant by an ant, a lion by a wasp, and a cedar by the canker worm. It is curious to observe how Spenser mixes up his unreliable natural history with open fable. Thus a spider can poison a dragon, the little fish Remora can bring a ship to a stop by cleaving to her keel, and the beetle kindle fire within a hollow tree.

The white Bull wallowing in the grass, the Bull that was afterwards stung by the Brize, is an early exercise in the picturesque:

In Summers day, when *Phœbus* fairly shone,
I saw a Bull as white as driuen snowe,
With gilden hornes embowed like the Moone,
In a fresh flowring meadow lying lowe:

The first work of real importance was "The Shepheardes Calender." This is a collection of twelve short poems, dialogues between supposed shepherds, eclogues as they were called, founded on the model of those of Mantuan and Marot.

In these pieces the shepherds, having no prescribed subject, might talk of anything their authors had at heart. It was customary to expose, under a veil of pastoral imagery, the corruptions of the clergy, to hymn the simple life, to compliment some prince or princess; and all this is here done. Elizabeth is flattered, rusticity is praised, and Protestantism exalted above the Church of Rome. In this way, an ecclesiastical allegory is occasionally cropping up, and if we add that there are also frequent personal references—to Archbishop Grindal under the name of Algrind, to Spenser's College friend Harvey, under the name of Hobbinol, and by the name of Colin Clout [3] to Spenser himself—we can see that the subject matter was temporarily interesting, and no doubt more interesting in Spenser's day than in our own. To-day, even with the aid of Mr. Walter Crane's illustrations, "The Shepheardes Calender" is not undull to read through, but there are pretty things in it; indeed, the poem is all pretty, though now too long for the interest of the subject; no longer a living performance.

[3] Spenser, says Mr. Henry Morley, "had read Skelton's bold denunciation of Church worldliness, and from Skelton's Colin Clout, who spoke the ills he knew as one of the common people, Spenser took the name by which he called himself in all his poems."

The opening, January, is as fair an instance as any other of the prevailing tone:

> All as the Sheepe, such was the shepeheards looke,
> For pale and wanne he was, (alas the while,)
> May seeme he lovd, or els some care he tooke:
> Well couth he tune his pipe, and frame his stile.

What he complains of is Rosalind's cruelty. Of this cruelty, in prose rejection, Spenser complained,[4] or to this cruelty Spenser referred at intervals throughout his life, and it is therefore not unreasonably supposed that there was an actual prototype. Besides, E. K., who supplied his friend's book with Notes, tells us that "Rosalinde is also a feigned name, which being wel ordered, will bewray the very name of hys loue and mistresse, whom by that name he coloureth"; Rose Linde or Rose Dinlei, say the more pertinacious commentators with a particularity that does not convince.

In February, the end of the old year, there is appropriately a discourse of old age. Thenot, in his own person, gives an unrepining description of that state:

> Selfe haue I worne out thrise threttie yeares,
> Some in much ioy, many in many teares:
> Yet neuer complained of cold nor heate,
> Of Sommers flame, nor of Winters threat:
> Ne euer was to Fortune foéman,
> But gently tooke, that vngently came.

[4] In the course of this complaining Spenser writes two lines:

> You naked trees, whose shady leaues are lost,
> Wherein the byrds were wont to build their bowre:

which Shakespeare perhaps had running in his head when he improved it:

> Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.

There follows the pretty fable of the oak and the briar. The briar was conceited for

> thereto aye wonned to repayre
> The shepheards daughters, to gather flowres,
> To peinct their girlonds with his colowres.
> And in his small bushes vsed to shrowde
> The sweete Nightingale singing so lowde:[5]

But, in fact, he was dependent on the oak, for when the oak was cut down, the briar, exposed to the heat of the sun, immediately was scorched. Such ignorance of the common facts of the countryside would be amazing but in a pastoral; the sturdy briar flourishing in all places and being no more afraid of the sun than the marigold.

The old year opened in March, and in March, because of the season, two country boys sing of love:

> For Winter's wrath beginnes to quell,
> And pleasant spring appeareth.
> The grasse nowe ginnes to be refresht,
> The Swallow peepes out of her nest,
> And clowdie Welkin cleareth.

The flavour of the opening year in this is again caught in Thomalin's account of his shooting at Cupid, the little god, all lively and springing from bough to bough.

The next month is devoted to Court praises. Hobbinol will sing Colin's lay:

> Of fayre *Eliza*, Queene of shepheardes all:
> Which once he made, as by a spring he laye,
> And tuned it vnto the Waters fall.

[5] The oak was hard to cut down, and Spenser has some sympathetic lines of which Scott in the "Lay" caught the music:

> For it had bene an auncient tree,
> Sacred with many a mysteree,
> And often crost with the priestes crewe.

The lay, though pastorally pretty, is gross in flattery. It is prettiest at the end, where it gets among shepherd girls and "damsines," and off its subject. Elizabeth having been praised in April, the poet is bold enough in May to put forward his old patron, Archbishop Grindal, though in disfavour at Court, as a type of the true Protestant pastor. There is, to be sure, the cover of a polite pseudonym, but it is the boldly obvious one of Algrind. This piece of piety accomplished, the remainder is devoted to the fable of the "Fox and the Kid," the fox standing for the deceiving Romish priests. But the allegory is not well preserved. The fox appears, a priest in the disguise of a pedlar, to deceive not a man but a kid; the traffic between kids and pedlars being in Spenser's day, as in our own, of the smallest.

In June, Colin again complains of Rosalind and of how Menalcas, the now accepted suitor, has won his place by treachery, tempting his lass "to wexe so light." Hobbinol opens, calling upon Colin to admire the rareness of a day in June:

> The simple ayre, the gentle warbling wynde,
> So calme, so coole, as no where else I fynde:
> The grassye ground with daintye Daysies dight,
> The Bramble bush, where Byrds of euery kynde
> To the waters fall their tunes attemper right.[6]

[6] This is the month in which occurs the recognition of "Tityrus." Chaucer is spoken of as preeminently a pastoral and amorous pathetical poet. Parenthetically it is said that he could tell us "mery tales," but otherwise the "character would fit Spenser himself as well as Chaucer."

Colin, in reply, tells of his grief, and Hobbinol is moved to tell how much pleasure he has had in Colin's songs. The praise is very general and high-flown. There is no discrimination of the sort of excellence, but it must be rare to find a poet admiring himself so simply and with such beautiful and self-pleased delight.

> I sawe *Calliope* wyth Muses moe,
> Soone as thy oaten pype began to sound,
> Theyr yuory Luyts and Tamburins forgoe.
> And from the fountaine, where they sat around,
> Renne after hastely thy siluer sound.

A Church allegory, skipping August, takes us into Autumn. This allegory, not very interesting in July, is in September merely uninteresting. There are not enough points made. The Romish priests are called wolves, and so figured—that is all. In the middle, there is the roundelay to which August is devoted, as exquisite a piece of foolish verse music as was ever composed by a metrical magician, the grave tones of Perigot alternating with the high-pitched undersongs of Willie, a duet to be done by a tenor and the clear treble of a choir boy. October is occupied with a discourse about Poetry, or rather about the neglect into which Poetry has fallen. Its most fit place is in the Palaces of Princes, where there are "rewards and fairies," but, alas! men do not honour the poet as they should.[7]

[7] We find remarks in the same vein in "The Teares of the Muses":

> It most behoues the honorable race
> Of mightie Peeres, true wisedome to sustaine,

As a contribution to aesthetics it is very easy to imagine something more academic than this. There is only one aesthetical remark, Cuddie's saying that the "maker" may be too much under the dominion of passion to make the true matter of imagination.[8] Of poetry the argument has a good definition—"no arte, but a diuine gift and heauenly instinct not to bee gotten by laboure and learning, but adorned with both: and poured into the witte by a certaine ἐνθουσιασμὸς, and celestiall inspiration;" and in the advice, offered by Piers to Cuddie, to sing a more martial strain we can see that Spenser was dreaming of the Faerie Queene.

The last two months are paraphrases of two of Marot's, the first a lament for some maiden of great

---

and in "The Ruines of Time":

> How manie great ones may remembred be,
> Which in their daies most famouslie did florish?
> Of whome no word we heare, nor signe now see,
> But as things wipt out with a sponge to perishe,
> Because they liuing, cared not to cherishe
> No gentle wits, through pride or couetize,
> Which might their names for euer memorize.

or comprehensively,

> O let the man, of whom the Muse is scorned,
> Nor aliue, nor dead be of the Muse adorned.

[8] All otherwise the state of Poet stands,
For lordly loue is such a Tyranne fell:
That where he rules, all power he doth expell.
The vaunted verse a vacant head demaundes,
Ne wont with crabbed care the Muses dwell.

Conformably with this, he afterwards goes on to prescribe wine as the true mother of invention.

blood who is called Dido, the last the common comparison of the seasons to the life of man. It is dainty and plaintive, but suffers from the prevailing fault of the poem—wordiness. The best of it is the picture of the boys' delight in the sports of youth:

> How often haue I scaled the craggie Oke
> All to dislodge the Rauen of her neste:

or in a smaller strain:

> To make fine cages for the Nightingale,
> And Baskets of bulrushes was my wont:

and, indeed, what is chiefly remarkable throughout "The Shepheardes Calender" is the ease of the beautiful expatiation where the theme is light. Where there is a less go-as-you-please subject, as in the passages devoted to Court flattery or Church matters, the fluency of the imagination is less marked. To the memory the whole has as little attachment as the music of the flute. One recollects to have heard something that comes upon the ear with a delicate charm, but the impression left is no more defined than that.

> See, how on every bough the birds express,
> In their sweet notes, their happiness.[9]

This barrenness when dealing with a definite subject is also very observable in "The Teares of the Muses," not to say that there is little else observable in this verbose performance. The Muses complain, each in turn, of the neglect into which learning and poetry have fallen, and their complaint hardly varies. It is not difficult to agree with Mr. Henry Morley that these

[9] Dryden. "The Indian Emperor."

verses were written ten years or more before 1591, our earliest known date of publication. There is little upon which to remark, except that in the Prologue there is the original of some famous lines of Gray,[10] and that Terpsichore, speaking in favour of her art of delight, says that Ignorance and Infamy, with their children Error, Folly, and Spite, have degraded pleasure so that

> Faire Ladies loues they spot with thoughts impure,
> And gentle mindes with lewd delights distaine:

Another poem, "Virgil's Gnat," also published in 1591, is also undoubtedly earlier, though how much earlier we do not know. The story, a free paraphrase of a Latin one, then supposed to have been written by Virgil, tells how a gnat warned a sleeping shepherd that he was about to be stung by a serpent. The shepherd awaking, and not realising the gnat's good intentions, kills the stinging insect, and, thereafter, being awake, the serpent. In a dream, the ghost of the gnat visits the shepherd to complain to him of the

[10] The ioyous Nymphes and lightfoote Faeries
Which thether came to heare their musick sweet
And to the measure of their melodies
Did learne to moue their nimble shifting feete;

with which we may compare "The Progress of Poesy," I. 3:

> The rosy-crowned Loves are seen
> On Cytherea's day
> With antic sport, and blue-ey'd pleasures,
> Frisking light in frolic measures;
> Now pursuing, now retreating,
> Now in circling troops they meet:
> To brisk notes in cadence beating
> Glance their many-twinkling feet.

outrage thus unwittingly committed. The shepherd builds a monument—it is to be supposed not a large one—to the gnat. That Spenser used this story as a parable of his own relations with Leicester is evident from the prefatory verses:

> Wrong'd yet not daring to expresse my paine.

With some pretty writing in places, the poem is evidently early writing. The dead gnat's account of the Tartarean and Elysian populace is a pure insertion, detailed and tiresome. Besides, even at the beginning, Spenser takes too long to get under weigh. But one is refreshed with passages, as where the poet traces the shepherd's, more properly the goat-herd's ideal:

> This all his care, this all his whole indeuour
> To this his minde and senses he doth bend,
> How he may flow in quiets matchles treasour,

or when, as in a careful drawing in sepia, he sketches the browsing flock:

> To an high mountaines top he with them went,
> Where thickest grasse did cloath the open hills:
> They now amongst the woods and thickets ment,
> Now in the valleies wandring at their wills,
> Spread themselues farre abroad through each descent;
> Some on the soft greene grasse feeding their fills;
> Some clambring through the hollow cliffes on hy,
> Nibble the bushie shrubs, which growe thereby.

There is, too, one dramatic passage—the killing by the just awaking shepherd of the snake, done in a sort of numb furor of sleep, rage, and fear. In the account of Tartarus there is the usual reference to Itys, and the last words of the gnat have a wailing sound:

Them therefore as bequeathing to the winde,
I now depart, returning to thee neuer,
And leaue this lamentable plaint behinde.
But doo thou haunt the soft downe rolling riuer,
And wilde greene woods, and fruitful pastures minde,
And let the flitting aire my vaine words seuer.

"The Ruines of Time," first published in 1591, was probably written before the "Gnat," indeed, it is generally supposed that Spenser, in celebrating recent deaths in the noble house of Dudley (Sidney, 1586; Leicester, 1588), made use of an early poem, mentioned in the Harvey correspondence, "Stemmata Dudleiana." Mr. Henry Morley suggests further that another early poem, "Dreames," commended by Harvey, was also made use of. Equally obviously the matter has been brought up to date. There is some verse worthy of the author of "The Faerie Queene," meaningful and fluent, but in the main there is the usual discursiveness. Shortly, such story as there is, runs as follows: Spenser sees a woman with yellow locks "like wyrie gold" weeping by the Thames. This woman, who personifies the City Verulam long since ruined and decayed, laments the destructions time brings about, and in the course of her lamenting bewails the deaths of Leicester [1] and Sidney. For any lasting fame one must trust to the divine poets.

[1] In the famous passage on the death of Leicester, too famous for quotation, there is a couplet which remained in the ear of Keats:

O trustlesse state of miserable men,
That builde your blis on hope of earthly thing.

Cf. "Endymion":

O what a sigh she gave in finishing,
And look, quite dead to every worldly thing!

This is the first and much the longest part of the poem, and in it there is much of the poet of Mutability. The Grecian Libbard that overran the East, and the whelps whom he left "their kingdomes to devoure," have all gone the way of Ancus and of Tullus.

The verses are addressed to Sidney's sister Mary, Countess of Pembroke, and on one occasion Spenser forgets the Lady City is speaking, and in the customary Elizabethan manner prophesies eternal fame for his own verse, a prophecy this poem would not have made good.

But on this theme, the merits of his trade, Spenser was always wisely eloquent:

> For deeds doe die, how euer noblie donne,
> And thoughts of men do as themselves decay,
> But wise wordes taught in numbers for to runne,
> Recorded by the Muses, liue for ay;[2]

---

[2] This is nearer the truth of fact than Scott's depreciation of writers when compared with doers, an attitude enthusiastically and characteristically approved by Sir Leslie Stephen.

Wordsworth in his letter to "The Friend" has the sense of the whole matter: "A perception also is implied of the inherent superiority of contemplation to action. 'The Friend' does not in this contradict his own words, where he has said heretofore, that 'doubtless it is nobler to Act than to Think.' In those words, it was his purpose to censure that barren contemplation, which rests satisfied with itself in cases where the thoughts are of such quality that they may be, and ought to be, embodied in action. But he speaks now of the general superiority of thought to action;—as preceding and governing all action that moves to salutary purposes: and, secondly, as leading to elevation, the absolute possession of the individual mind, and to a consistency or harmony of the being within itself, which no outward agency can reach to disturb or to impair:—and, lastly, as producing works of pure

or more famously:

> For not to haue been dipt in *Lethe* lake,
> Could saue the sonne of *Thetis* from to die;
> But that blinde bard did him immortall make
> With verses, dipt in deaw of *Castalie*:

When Verulam stops speaking, the second part begins: It consists of a series of sonnets giving an account of great things that appeared in a vision to Spenser—towers, giants, bridges, great things that decayed. Then, while he is troubled with those sights, described in six sonnets, he hears a voice calling upon him to look on his other side. And here begins the third part—another series of six sonnets: a swan, a harp, a coffer, a bed, a knight, and an ark that were all carried up to Heaven being severally described.

There is a curious passage about the harp of Philisides[3] (Sir Philip Sidney):

> Whilest thus I looked, loe adowne the *Lee,*
> I sawe an Harpe stroong all with siluer twyne,
> And made of golde and costlie yuorie,
> Swimming, that whilome seemed to haue been
> The harpe, on which *Dan Orpheus* was seene
> Wylde Beasts and forrests after him to lead,
> But was th' Harpe of *Philisides* now dead.

---

science; or of the combined faculties of imagination, feeling, and reason;—works which, both from their independence in their origin upon accident, their nature, their duration, and the wide spread of their influence, are entitled rightly to take place of the noblest and most beneficent deeds of heroes, statesmen, legislators, or warriors."

[3] Philisides was the name of one of the shepherds in Sidney's "Arcadia," a name formed by himself from his own.

"But was th' Harpe of Philisides now dead!" a casual triumph of onomatopœia in which one can distinctly hear the thumb on the string.

So far then we have the perfecting of the literary craftsman without the production of any single perfect work; nay, with the exception of "The Shepheardes Calender," the bundle of literary exercises, pleasing in their music, has left nothing but stray quotations to the world. "The Shepheardes Calender" itself is by no means a masterpiece of the kind easy to read, but in it there are constant passages of sweet piping, so clear, so youthful, breathings from so nice a mouth as to enchant the listening ear. It is an experience to have read it, walking a day on the slopes of lowland moors and stopping occasionally for spring water. One is perhaps a little weary at nightfall, still the experience, or rather the possibility of experiencing it, for the poem is not much read, is a national possession. There is something here that is not done again, and to know "The Faerie Queene" is not to know all the notes of its author. Here, and it is appropriate in a youthful poem, the treble is at its clearest.

One other work, published at this time (1591), was almost certainly completed before the first three books of "The Faerie Queene" (1590), but to fix a date for "Mother Hubberd's Tale" is not easy. The whole framework and, if one can trust one's feeling, much of the writing beneath the writing over, reads like the loosely sketched satire of a youth. On the other hand, the tone given by the overlying writing, and especially

by some passages of unusual concentration—the opening words, or the complaint against the life of the courtier—would induce one to assign as late a date as possible. Perhaps, without receiving absolutely literally what Spenser says in his preface, doubtless a disguisement, we may conclude that the poem, as we have it, was some years in an off and on making. The more bitter, as the more veracious parts, would not be early. In any case, we have here, among these numerous performances, a piece *sui generis*. Comparisons of this satire with those of Dryden or Pope are needlessly rough, but it is true that there is practically none of Spenser's usual emotional receptivity, and that the poem is compacted of shrewd comment, and observation that, though rambling, is shrewd. Those qualities, in their activity as in their volume, were new. No doubt any painter of the picturesque, as constantly pleasing as the young Spenser, does in reality see much more than the cloyed reader gives him credit for. Though it seems that the thing is rather seen by him than that he sees it, in actual fact there is no such distinction, and the recorder of smooth delights and varying sensations must be open eyed. It ought not to surprise us that the poet of "The Visions of the World's Vanitie" and "The Ruines of Time" should be able to produce a work of observation; no more than that the poet of "Endymion" should be capable of sight.[1] So, too, the foundations of the

[1] music's golden tongue
Flattered to tears this aged man and poor.
Cf. Leigh Hunt, "Imagination and Fancy."

shrewdness can be discovered in parts of "The Shepheardes Calender."[5] Yet a new combination, with the proportions entirely altered and the intensity increased, is a quite new thing, and it is sufficient that no uninformed person who had merely read Spenser's works in their order would have recognised "Mother Hubberd's Tale" as his.

Prosopopoia (personification) the poem is properly called. The title, "Mother Hubberd's Tale," is merely the slightest form of the subterfuge with which satirists put themselves on terms with a public that, unprovoked, loves amiability. It is the same humour, and wise speakers always humour it, that takes fright at personalities. Nor is there any serious sacrifice, for so long as the attack is not open, even malice is not hated by the friendly race of men. People like kindly writing, or writing that does not advertise itself as unkindly.

In the opening, Spenser says he was ill, and that, to comfort him, his friends came and told him tales:

> Some tolde of Ladies, and their Paramoures;
> Some of braue Knights, and their renowned Squires;
> Some of the Faeries and their strange attires;

but the best of all was one about the Fox and the Ape, told by Mother Hubberd. Nothing further concerning her appears till we come to the last four lines, which say simply that this was her tale.

The story is that the Ape and the Fox, not caring for their natural conditions, determine to better them-

[5] "The Fox and the Kid," *et alia.*

selves. They set out as beggars, the life without the collar appealing to them, as to most aspirants, first,

> Free men some beggers call, but they *be* free;

they meet a husbandman, who, being accosted by the Ape,

> And well dispos'd him some reliefe to showe.
> Askt if in husbandrie he ought did knowe,
> To plough, to plant, to reap, to rake, to sowe,
> To hedge, to ditch, to thrash, to thetch, to mowe.

Alarmed at those drudgeries, so monosyllabically cumulative, the Ape asks for lighter employment, and, at last, it is settled that he and his "cur dog" should watch the sheep. These, of course, they finally devour, and, started again disguised as clerks, meet a priest and ask for alms. The priest, shocked at their descending to a trade so "base and vile," demands their license. A forged paper is produced, which the priest, unable to read and unwilling to confess his inability, pronounces satisfactory. Pressed by the flattering Fox to put them in the way of doing better, he then proceeds to explain how they may hope to obtain a cure of souls. The mixed cynicism and good sense of this:

> To feede mens soules (quoth he) is not in man:
> For they must feed themselves doo what we can.

and the bitter outbreaks against cozenage are eloquent of Spenser's personal distress. If one has already risen, one has other things to do than to hate the arts by which men cause themselves to rise. Here the arts are those of the worldly clergy, partly because Spenser's party had set itself against the corruptions in the Church, partly because the incongruity between a pro-

fession above the world and an especially facile subservience to its usages is one of the first to pain the opening eye.

The next turn in the story is that the Ape and the Fox overshoot the mark again. A Court mule is their deliverer, with advice how to succeed at Court:

> How els (said he) but with a good bold face,
> And with big words, and with a stately pace,
> That men may thinke of you in generall,
> That to be in you, which is not at all.

At Court as a courtier the Ape becomes popular:

> For he mongst Ladies could their fortunes read
> Out of their hands, and merie leasings tell.

In contrast to his bad doings Spenser takes occasion to draw the "brave courtier," a character with virtues rather negative than positive. Nevertheless it was here, in the structure and tone of the verse, that Wordsworth found the metrical hint[6] for his "Happy Warrior":

> Yet the braue Courtier, in whose beateous thought
> Regard of honour harbours more than ought,
> Doth loath such base condition, to backbite
> Anies good name for enuie or despite:

Otherwise the point of interest is the praise of the life athletic, exercise, even then for idle youth, being the best way to keep out of mischief.[7]

[6] The material hints were his brother John, and Nelson, or rather Wordsworth's idea of an ideal Nelson.

[7] Cf. Shakespeare, "King John," IV. 2.

Pembroke to the King about Arthur—He should not be moved by fear to mew up his tender kinsman

> and to choke his days
> With barbarous ignorance, and deny his youth
> The rich advantage of good exercise.

This Court employment at last failing, the Ape and the Fox take to wandering again. In the forest they find the Lion sleeping, with his crown and sceptre laid beside. Steal them, counsels the Fox, and, the Ape demurring, vividly exclaims:

> One ioyous houre in blisfull happines,
> I chose before a life of wretchednes.

lines which it is impossible to believe Scott had not read.[8] The Ape succeeding, the Fox acts as his Prime Minister, and sells access to the King for heavy bribes. If the bribe is not forthcoming, the silly sheep may complain in vain of the wolf that slew her lamb:

> Soft Gooddie Sheepe (then said the Foxe) not soe:
> Vnto the King so rash ye may not goe,
> He is with greater matter busied,
> Than a Lambe, or the Lambes owne mothers hed.
> Ne certes may I take it well in part,
> That ye my cousin Wolfe so fowly thwart,
> And seeke with slaunder his good name to blot:
> For there was cause, els doo it he would not.

This is the last worldly lesson the ingenuous learns, to beware of calumniating guilt.

At length Jupiter hears and sends Mercury down to earth to restore the sleeping Lion to his throne. The insertion about Mercury is poor, a blemish on the tale; the actual end, on the other hand—the Lion's coming to his house, the Ape's running about the Palace in fear, and the final judgment—is amazingly swift and good.

[8] One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.

Technically there is one other blemish, and this throughout—the mixture of allegories. At one time the Ape and the Fox lord it over the other beasts, at others they mingle with actual men, as at the Court or in the Church. Sometimes we have a complete allegory, much more commonly a partial one. We should admit further that parts of "Mother Hubberd's Tale" are better than the rest, that the story carries better at the first reading than at the fourth, and that here is no satiric masterpiece always refreshing for its pith. But the production is genuine; it speaks of what has been learnt, and without exaggeration; the bitterness is not simulated, nor is it very bitter, rather sour, with a sourness experience has made. There is some unfairness in calling it a satire—this truthful speaking about the business of the world.

> He did appoint a warlike equipage
> Of forreine beasts, not in the forest bred,
> But part by land, and part by water fed;
> For tyrannie is with strange ayde supported.

That is not said for effect. There is here no romance of the bitter tongue. Is this to say the poem is pedestrian? It is a very peculiar poem, unlike our more splenetic writings since, the prose comment of a good man.

On his Faerie Pegasus Spenser is a different person altogether, in the romance of "Daphnaida," or tracing the destiny of the fly. In "Daphnaida" the metaphor of the white lioness, that enchains the imagination, was supplied to him, the white lion being the

cognizance of the Howards, but it is the test of a poet to avail himself of his material. Miss Douglas Howard, who had married Arthur Gorges, had died, and Spenser celebrates his friend's loss. The girl's Christian name, femalely unusable in poetry, was changed by Spenser to Daphne, and for reasons of correspondence Arthur appears as Alcyon. The poet speaks in his own person, and at the opening warns off those who

> in pleasure findeth sense,
> Or in this wretched life dooth take delight,
> Let him be banisht farre away from hence:
> Ne let the sacred Sisters here be hight,
> Though they of sorrow heauilie can sing;
> For euen their heauie song would breede delight:
> But here no tunes, saue sobs and grones shall ring.

which is perhaps too disingenuous, for no "heavie song" was ever more openly the minister to aesthetic pleasure.

The poem goes on to tell us how Spenser one evening walked abroad to take the air, and how there came into his mind the thought of the mutability of earthly things:

> I walkt abroade to breath the freshing ayre
> In open fields, whose flowring pride opprest
> With early frosts, had lost their beautie faire.
>
> There came vnto my minde a troublous thought,
> Which dayly dooth my weaker wit possesse,
> Ne lets it rest, vntill it forth haue brought
> Her long borne Infant, fruit of heauinesse,
> Which she conceiued hath through meditation
> Of this worlds vainnesse and lifes wretchednesse,
> That yet my soule it deepely doth empassion.

So as I muzed on the miserie,
In which men liue, and I of many most,
Most miserable man; I did espie
Where towards me a sory wight did cost,
Clad all in black, that mourning did bewray
And *Iaakob* staffe in hand deuoutlie crost,
Like to some Pilgrim come from farre away.

One is irresistibly reminded of the opening effect in the "Leech-Gatherer."

This man whom Spenser met was the erst jolly shepherd Alcyon, now set to die of melancholy. If it must be so, says the poet, Alcyon should at least tell the cause of his misery, lest men should say he was guilty of some secret crime. So persuaded, Alcyon speaks in parables of his shepherding, and of how he met and tamed a white lioness, who now, alas! is dead. This metaphor of the young lioness, white as the former rose, might have been understood by anyone who had attentively read the preface, but Spenser, for the further help of his reader, pretends not to understand it. He begs Alcyon to expound the riddle:

Then sighing sore, *Daphne* thou knewest (quoth he)
She now is dead; ne more endured to say;
But fell to ground for great extreamitie.

a close imitation of the reply of the man in black at the close of Chaucer's "Book of the Duchesse," so close that one wonders how the elemental dramatic virtue has evaporated. Alcyon, then recovering, begins a long complaining. The whole is too wordy, but the tone is true to grief, and there are some verses of especial charm, as where he speaks of the misery of life:

Our daies are full of dolor and disease,
Our life afflicted with incessant paine,
That nought on earth may lessen or appease,
Why then should I desire here to remaine?

or when he tells of his past happiness:

And when those pallid cheekes and ashy hew,
In which sad death his pourtraicture had writ,
. . . . . .
I match with that sweet smile and chearful brow,
Which all the world subdued vnto it;
How happie was I then, and wretched now?

How happie was I, when I saw her leade
The Shepheards daughters dauncing in a rownd?
How trimly would she trace and softly tread
The tender grasse with rosie garland crownd?
And when she list aduance her heauenly voyce,
Both Nimphs and Muses nigh she made astownd,
And flocks and shepheards caused to reioyce.[9]

He hates the earth for her unsteadfastness:

Hencefoorth I hate what euer Nature made,
And in her workmanship no pleasure finde:
For they be all but vaine, and quickly fade,
So soone as on them blowes the Northern winde,

or still more sweetly:

And ye fond men on fortunes wheele that ride,
Or in ought vnder heauen repose assurance,
Be it riches, beautie, or honors pride:
Be sure that they shall haue no long endurance,
But ere ye be aware will flit away;
For nought of them is yours, but th' onely vsance
Of a small time, which none ascertaine may.

[9] Spenser is never satisfied but when he is pleased with both sight *and* sound.

Of the poem as a whole one may say that it is a strange production, real unreal, and unreal real. The metaphor of the lioness, at the beginning, is oddly imaginative: the subsequent flow of grief, natural and unstrained. Much of the phraseology, and, of course, the pastoral setting, is unreal, but the outpouring is the very music of sobs and sighs: while Alcyon's departing, with fate obscure, is of the essence of the romance of melancholy. The production is that of one complete in his art, and did we not know that it was written just after the first three books of "The Faerie Queene," we should be satisfied of this lateness from internal evidence alone.

Very nearly if not quite as mature is the Butterfly and the Spider. Nowhere is there a story more excellently told. It is true one does not quite understand why a writer, capable of such accomplishment, should, on such a theme, have expended so much care. It may be that, under the ease of the fable, there is veiled some real happening to which we have lost the clue, but it is not impossible that Spenser's interest in his little story was solely due to its supplying him with a happy allegory of his constant moral:

> But what on earth can long abide in state?
> Or who can him assure of happie day?

In the opening, a Butterfly, livelily described, flies in the morning air. The first butterfly was originally a nymph, attendant on Venus. The goddess had ordered her nymphs to gather flowers, and one, nimbler than the rest, had gathered most. The rest, jealous of her

success, pretended to Venus that Cupid had aided, and Venus, mindful of the Psyche episode, herself turned the nymph into a fly, the wings of which were to carry the colours of all the flowers she had gathered. So much for prefatory ancestry.

The Butterfly with which Spenser is concerned flutters about in the garden, tasting of every flower.

> What more felicitie can fall to creature,
> Than to enjoy delight with libertie?

None certainly, but a spider was lying in wait for the butterfly, and spiders hate butterflies, for once there was a maid, Arachne, who wove so skilfully that she challenged Minerva to a contest in tapestry. The mortal produced a picture of Europa being carried off by Jupiter in the guise of a white bull.

> She seem'd still backe vnto the land to looke,
> And her play-fellowes aide to call.

Exquisite as was the main work, more exquisite still was its border,

> wrought of sundrie flowres
> Enwouen with an Yuie winding trayle:

The Goddess on her part wove a picture of her own old strife with Neptune, and round this a border of olives,

> Emongst those leaues she made a Butterflie,
> With excellent deuice and wondrous slight,
> Fluttring among the Oliues wantonly,
> That seem'd to liue, so like it was in sight;
> The veluet nap, which on his wings doth lie,
> The silken downe with which his backe is dight,
> His broad outstretched hornes, his hayrie thies,
> His glorious colours, and his glistering eies.

Seeing this marvel, Arachne shrunk with envy. Her blood, like that of poor Fafnir, turned to poisonous rancour, and, as being shrunken she could not swell to a dragon, she dwindled to a spider. Arachne's progeny resent her defeat to this day, and, since they cannot punish Minerva, punish butterflies. The mastery of the versification prepares the reader for "The Faerie Queene."

Mercifully, this gigantic work was never finished; its ideal scheme stretching to twenty-four books. Even with the poem as it is Spenser was occupied, at intervals, for some sixteen years. We know that he had started it in 1580, and that in the eighties he was busied with it. In 1590 the first three books were published, and in 1596 another three. The verses on Mutability and the loss of the poet's papers encourage the belief that, had not death intervened, the exhaustless vein was continuing. The huge fragment produced thus gains in the richness of our idea of it. We have not merely an infinitely long poem completed; on the contrary, a panorama of imagination in its endless flow.

In the prefatory letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, giving an account of the intended work, we are told that Arthur is to be taken as the type of the perfect man. He is to be perfected in the twelve moral virtues, each to be exemplified by a knight, and each to have devoted to it one book. Afterwards there were, possibly, (Spenser did not positively promise) to be the twelve political virtues. But these were not reached. In the twelfth book we were to be told that the Queen kept Court for

twelve faery days, in each of which one adventure was to be undertaken by one faery knight, each such adventure, as I understand the letter, to be recounted in one book. But then there should have been thirteen.

To a poem on this plan the practical objection is that you have to wait till the end for the explanation, and to meet this we have the letter with its prose argument.

The world-famous and school-famous opening, enticing with all the indefiniteness of romance:

A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine,

and rich with the contrasts—the knight and the lady, red, white and black—on which the whole book relies for its effects, is beyond critical appraisal. The knight of strait ways, journeying in a limitless forest, mazy with paths and shrouded with every tree,[10] to meet his sudden test in Error's den, the first adventure being with a monster—something huge with vague supernaturalism about it—all this, with its concluding in the trickling peace of Morpheus Cave, is forever unsurpassable, the whole atmosphere of Romance enchained within five hundred lines.

Nor are passages of painting from actual Nature wanting. The "little lowly hermitage" might often be seen by prosaic travellers who imagined no fairy tales

[10] Taken from Chaucer's "Parlement of Foules," ll. 175-184. Chaucer's "Sayling firr" appears as Spenser's "Sayling Pine," and his "bilder ook" without alteration; but Spenser has knowledge of trees that is his own:

The Maple seeldom inward sound.

in "The Wood beyond the World." By way of detraction it can only be said that the similes are not always, either here or throughout the poem, of even excellence.[1] There is a bad one (in verse 23) comparing the knight, beset by the children of Error, to a shepherd annoyed by gnats, the kind of comparison that belittles achievement.

In the second Canto there are few remarkable poetical successes beyond that telling of the sadness of the bewitched trees, and that describing the doubtful contest of Beauty, between Fidessa and Fraelissa, the verse balancing to and fro as the victory inclines now to this side, now to that.[2]

We may take occasion to notice in this first book Spenser's constant habit of beginning each new canto with a general reflection, statement or exclamation. This canto opens with a verse describing scenery; at the beginning of the next we are told that Beauty in distress moves compassion. We start Canto 4 with an admonition to youthful chivalry to beware of fraud, in the opening of Canto 5 there is the noble statement

[1] For fuller references to the similes see Appendix B.

[2] So doubly lou'd of Ladies vnlike faire,
Th' one seeming such, the other such indeede,
One day in doubt I cast for to compare,
Whether in beauties glorie did exceede;
A Rosy girlond was the victors meede:
Both seemde to win, and both seemde won to bee,
So hard the discord was to be agreede.
Fraelissa was as faire, as faire mote bee,
And euer false *Duessa* seemde as faire as shee.

about the unresting energy of the noble heart; it being evidently the poet's original purpose to mark the beginning of each new canto, and by the momentary break in the sense to separate it from the last.

A monument of many things, "The Faerie Queene" is especially the monument of the new Protestantism, and it is by a happy employment of conventional romance [3]

[3] For the machinery of the "Faerie Queene" Spenser borrows unashamedly the stock incidents from the books of chivalry, relying confidently on their still surviving power to please. Thus the combat always hangs in the balance. At first the hero appears to be about to be defeated, is generally defeated in the first two rounds, but is revived, when fainting, by his lady's voice (cp. I. 19 and V. 12). The blood flows in streams from the combatants (cp. V. 9). The romantic quest begins in the common form, as in "Gareth and Lynette":

> It was my chance (my chance was faire and good)
> There for to find a fresh unproued knight. (VII. 47.)

The giant, whose castle maintains a horrid silence, is summoned by a Jack the Giant-killer's bugle call (VIII. 3), and falls like a Monarch of the wood. In the Dragon fight, the hugest combat of all, Una is content to pray for her Knight, who, however, relies, as befits the importance of the occasion, on the supernatural aid of the Well and Tree of Life. And it would be tedious to remark here, what necessarily comes out in any narrative account of the succeeding books, what constant reliance he came to place on the tournament at random, the lost babe, the enchanted girdle, giants, witches, sciomancy (as in the making of Florimell the false), amazons, brigands, and enchantments. One of the signs of the originality of the First Book is that the use of this machinery, though evident, is not nearly *so* evident as it afterwards becomes. As Spenser's interest in his moral fable becomes less intense, his preoccupation with adventure increases. The framework of the First Book is moral, that of the Fourth, to give only one instance, romantic.

that thus early in the poem Fidessa is stated to have been

> Borne the sole daughter of an Emperour,

the Emperour who dwelt by Tiber's side.

Conformably with this, the interest of the succeeding canto is chiefly allegoric, but the introduction of the devouring lion, made mild by Una's gentleness, is picturesquely effective. There is a well-placed contrast in verses 4 and 5:

> One day nigh wearie of the yrkesome way,
> From her vnhastie beast she did alight,
> And on the grasse her daintie limbes did lay
> In secret shadow, farre from all mens sight:
> . . . . . .
> It fortunéd, out of the thickest wood
> A ramping Lyon rushed suddainly.

With the contrasting effects of light Spenser is also fond of playing. Here it is her angel's face that shyned bright,

> And made a sunshine in the shadie place.

And when in the first Canto the knight had looked into the Cave of Error,

> his glistring armor made
> A litle glooming light, much like a shade.

Again making use of contrast, we have a little later the picturesque of the life of the toilers—the female all alone:

> Long she thus traueiled through deserts wyde,
> By which she thought her wandring knight shold pas,
> Yet neuer shew of liuing wight espyde;
> Till that at length she found the troden gras,

In which the tract of peoples footing was,
Vnder the steepe foot of a mountaine hore;
The same she followes, till at last she has
A damzell spyde slow footing her before,
That on her shoulders sad a pot of water bore.

a thing no doubt seen. But it is all carried, like the things Tennyson put down in his note books, into picture. Unlike Chaucer's description of Griselda, the sentiment is not that of the thing observed but that of the artist-observer. Still, the relief to the romance is unquestionable, and Spenser's employment of these realities prevents the mind from being cloyed with his imaginings. As, for instance, when Arthur wounds Orgoglio, viii. 11:

He loudly brayd with beastly yelling sound,
That all the fields rebellowed againe;
As great a noyse, as when in Cymbrian plaine
An heard of Bulles, whom kindly rage doth sting,
Do for the milkie mothers want complaine,
And fill the fields with troublous bellowing;

one gets one's feet on the ground and a breathing space from invention.

"The House of Pride" is the first failure. "Lucifera" is a weak counterpart to Milton's "Lucifer," and "The Seven Deadly Sins," very unlike Dunbar's, are wooden. They are Figures, not Sins. One notices not them but the attack on the Monks and on Usury, and (in verse 43) the laboured and successful exercise in *onomatopœia*:

Which doen, the Chamberlain *Slowth* did to rest them call.

Equally conventional is the Hades of Duessa's journey,

where one verse alone adequately gives the atmosphere :

> on euery side them stood
> The trembling ghosts with sad amazed mood,
> Chattring their yron teeth, and staring wide
> With stonie eies ;

As to Spenser's virtuous Canto (Canto 10), it is dull. "The House of Holiness" might have been made real by Wordsworth. Spenser was never there. The Mount that leads to Paradise is compared first to Mount Sinai, then to the Mount of Olives, and then to Parnassus.[4]

Against those failures must be set successes as marked—the first canto, stamped on the world's imagination, the sixth, ninth, and twelfth. In the sixth canto Una with the Satyres is of a different kind of excellence from the first canto, a single picture, but extraordinarily pretty :

> And all the way their merry pipes they sound,
> That all the woods with doubled Eccho ring.

It is an exercise in the picturesque of contrast, the type of rudeness being represented by multitude, and the type of order, grace, perfection, by one—

> Straunge Lady, in so straunge habiliment,
> Teaching the Satyres which her sat around.

[4] There is, however, one of Spenser's happiest successes here. At a distance he sees a path leading to the Heavenly City, and reality comes in with the beautiful reference to Earth :

> As he thereon stood gazing, he might see
> The blessed Angels to and fro descend
> From highest heauen, in gladsome companee,
> And with great ioy into that Citie wend,
> As commonly as friend does with his frend.

As great, in a greater style, is the Canto of Despair. We are prepared to appreciate the gravity of losing hope by the terror of Sir Trevisan, the fleeing knight trembling so, Redcross can get no answer from him. The carcases of the suicides round the cave lead us through fear and drearíment to the attitude desired. Otherwise, the poison is so sweet, we should have sucked without knowing it was mortal. The most famous of all the verses, with its vision of "eternall rest,"

> And happie ease, which thou doest want and craue,
> And further from it daily wanderest:

is the true parent of all that the East has sung in English, an invitation to quietism. Another verse, almost equally famous:

> Then do no further goe, no further stray,
> But here lie downe, and to thy rest betake,
> Th' ill to preuent, that life ensewen may.
> For what hath life, that may it loued make,
> And giues not rather cause it to forsake?
> Feare, sicknesse, age, losse, labour, sorrow, strife,
> Paine, hunger, cold, that makes the hart to quake;

is at the summit of that weighted and tired beauty of which Spenser was master.

This canto is beautified, as so many others, by those pictures of soft peace with which Spenser often varies, in this case introduces, his narrative of grave happenings and shifting fates.[5] Before the introduction of the fleeing Sir Trevisan, Arthur speaks of his lineage to

[5] For fuller reference to such pictures cf. Appendix C.

Una, and tells of how in sleep he had met the Faerie Queene:

> For-wearied with my sports, I did alight
> From loftie steed, and downe to sleepe me layd;
> The verdant gras my couch did goodly dight,
> And pillow was my helmet faire displayd:
> Whiles euery sence the humour sweet embayd,
> And slombring soft my hart did steale away,
> Me seemed, by my side a royall Mayd
> Her daintie limbes full softly down did lay:

Una's Home in Canto 12 is as true as the Despair Canto to its central feeling, a home-felt happiness or household bliss. After the horrific contest with the monster, a "fry of children young" run out to meet the Conqueror and Una. The "comely virgins" "sett a girland greene" upon the fairer virgin,

> "And crowned her twixt earnest and twixt game."

The whole has the tone of secure domesticity, "port after stormie seas," and, mingling with this beatification on earth, there is the ethereal music:

> During the which there was an heauenly noise
> Heard sound through all the Pallace pleasantly,
> Like as it had bene many an Angels voice,
> Singing before th' eternall majesty.

All this has its warrant in the books of romance, but even in the first book of "The Faerie Queene" we come upon side passages which testify to its time of origin. The Romance of Despair would not have been what it is but for the prevalent gospel of a retreat from the world preached by the monastic ideal, a gospel which,

despite his Protestant rejection of it, had constant attraction for Spenser; and the whole romance of Una's home is dependent upon the Elizabethan conception of an "Antique World," simpler and more native in manner than contemporary custom, which "excesse and pride did hate," and where "honour was the meed of victorie."[6] Similarly to find Bath spoken of as a distant city of romance,[7] is to be reminded of the difficulties of Elizabethan travel. Gunpowder,[8] a levelling invention that minimised knightly advantages, is denounced as an introduction of the devil's, for the gentleman's horse and armour were not yet extinct.

The chivalric age was ended but not completely, and so women are still represented ideally as weak.[9] Una, on hearing of the death of her knight, faints, and, on seeing the Dwarf with his master's spear, again faints, indeed, at this surprise three times.[10] As susceptible to tender impressions is Marinell's mother, who on a like occasion "swowned thrise."[1] It was the office of chivalry to protect women because they were weaker than men, and it became the ideal to depict them as eminently in need of assistance. That, in Elizabethan times, they were actually creatures of extreme sensibility we need not believe. The stripping of Duessa, in Canto 8, by the perfect knights Arthur and Red-

[6] For references to the "Antique World" see I. XII. 14, II. VII. 16, III. I. 13, IV. VIII. 30, and the opening of Book V.

[7] XI. 30.

[8] VII. 13.

[9] VI. 37.

[10] VII. 20 and 24.

[1] III. IV. 35.

cross,[2] an outrage viewed by the approving Una, is an unwitting testimony to the coarseness of Elizabethan manners. Here, indeed, as in the later books, in the unreprehended treatment of Radegund, Pœana, or Malbecco, in the invention of Mirabella, the story of the Squire of Dames, or in all the business about the girdle of chastity, we have evidence that the unconscious tone, not only of Spenser's society but of Spenser himself, was ruder than the prevailing tone of the poem. That is consciously gentle, so that the chivalry has a slight air of unreality about it—a picture rather than an emotion.

But such suggestion of contrasting tones is, in the main, absent from the first book, in which the flow of romance is little encumbered by contact with social realities. In this, as in other ways, the first book is the best. For one thing, it has an introduction air about it, a setting out among the happenable—which in the later books is necessarily missing. Fairyland, in the second book, is no longer *terra incognita.* Nor is it otherwise with single effects. So good a contrasting companion as the gentle lady could not again be found. Some other single effects could at best but be repeated.

[2] The chief poetical beauty of Canto VIII. is the description of Ignaro:

> At last with creeping crooked pace forth came
> An old old man, with beard as white as snow,
> That on a staffe his feeble steps did frame,
> And guide his wearie gate both too and fro:
> For his eye sight him failed long ygo.

A night-cap for the soul.

In short the outlines of romance are quickly given, Spenser's use of contrast in its first freshness could not again be presented to the reader; the main effect was made.

An additional advantage that the first book possesses is in the conduct of the allegory. The knight of holiness is not merely the knight of a special virtue. He stands also roughly for the virtuous man overcoming the temptations of the world. The first book is a triumph of allegory, because there the whole thing is done at once, and this also was what could only be done in a first enthusiasm when the zest of fabling was fresh. Allegorising palls, and it is never easy to combine an allegory with a story for long—at least so as to preserve the interest of both. The allegory must not be forgotten in the interest of the narrative, nor the sense of the narrative in the allegory. It is the duty of the believer to despise, but of the traveller to avoid, the lions in the path, and we are vexed when Bunyan's characters are punished for behaving like men of sense. Yet to sacrifice the sense of the narrative to that of the allegory is the commonest fault of allegorists. In his second book Spenser does not avoid it; the interest of his fourth and sixth, on the other hand, is only saved by his allegory becoming dim. In his first book he makes neither error: the allegory is plain and attention-arresting, the story consonant and sensible. Both hold the interest at the same time, and this, the fact that we have here a moral romance or romantic morality which taken either way is equally

interesting, furnishes an achievement unique in literature.

We have the right then to be amused when scholars claim to prefer the Second Part of "The Faerie Queene" to the First; for if this is not their self-congratulation that in one field they have outread Macaulay, it implies that they are willing to plead ignorance why "The Faerie Queene" is an addition to great literature. Without its vital meaning, its constant reference to the broadest issues of life, we should have regarded it as no more than the best of fairy tales.

The difficulty of combining instruction with amusement should not blind us to the truth that this is the one indispensable requirement of the greatest art. Instruction is to be understood in its broadest sense, of course, but there must be a reference to life, and what is life but morality, morality or immorality I mean, a series of adventures that raises moral issues. Thus it is not merely morality, or rather if one translates life directly into morality one gets something much narrower than life. And this is why a merely moral story has always an air of limitation. It becomes like the second book of "The Faerie Queene," and is no longer "general as the casing air."

This confinement of effect in the second book is not felt at once. It opens with a wide reference to the imaginative re-birth produced by the age of discoveries, and it tacks itself on, in a happy opening, to the Redcross masterpiece just completed. Sir Guyon, misinformed by Archimago, determines to attack a distant

knight, and his sudden abashal when he sees the Redcross on his surcoat is well imagined.

The book is concerned with the adventures of Sir Guyon and his attendant the Palmer. There is a necessary loss in the sex of the attendant, but apart from this, Talus in the fifth book is a better second. He is more picturesque, and, moreover, a real second, being often subjected to admonishment, not therefore, like the Palmer, an admonitor. Guyon himself, in the first canto, is too fond of moralisms, though in the course of them he sometimes strikes out poetry :

> " Palmer " (quoth he) " death is an equall doome
> To good and bad, the common Inne of rest."

Following on the unnotable second canto there comes the great invention of the third, an incursion into pure romance, with two quite new characters, male and female. One gets an idea of the advantage appertaining to Kingsley's " Man on horseback " in the freshly painted conquest of Trompart by Braggadocchio. Equally vivid is the picture of Braggadocchio and Trompart, frightened by what Archimago tells them of Arthur's prowess, and startled into new terror by the sound of Belphœbe's horn.

The description of this Diana, done, in the main, in common form, is remarkable once or twice as evidence of what the Elizabethans admired :

> Her iuorie forhead, full of bountie braue,
> Like a broad table did it selfe dispred.[3]

[3] Cf. Shakespeare, " Two Gentlemen of Verona," Act IV. Sc. 4 :

> Ay but her foreheads low,

Similarly old-fashionedly, the hair is yellow—

> In the old days black was not counted fair,
> Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name.

Indeed, Spenser's persistence in ascribing this colour to his heroines (there is no dark lady in "The Faerie Queene") is so marked as to tempt Warton to see in it a compliment to Elizabeth. We need not even necessarily suppose it was a compliment to a fashion she had encouraged, any more than we need take literally,

> Her yellow lockes crisped, like golden wyre,[4]

---

and Johnson's quotation from "The History of Guy of Warwick,"

> The same high forehead as Venus.

Also cf. "Tempest," Act IV. Sc. 1, apes

> With foreheads villainous low,

and Steevens's quotation from the old ballad, "A Peerlesse Paragon"—satirical:

> Her beetle brows all men admire
> Her forehead wondrous low.

For Elizabethan perfection a female forehead had to be both broad and high—a large forehead, perhaps like that in the First Folio engraving.

[4] "Wyre" is to us, doubtless, an odd expression. It is possible that the poets generally had observed the greater tendency to coarseness in red hair, and took its substance for granted, but the comparison, for the sake of emphasising the sheen, was traditional. Cf. Thomas Chestre's "Sir Launfall":

> Her haire shone as golde wire,

and Peele's "The Praise of Chastity":

> Whose ticing hair like nets of golden wire.

For one of the rare references to silken tresses in "The Faerie Queene," cf. Book IV. Canto 1, where Britomart's golden locks are likened to "a silken veile."

because of what we are told when the false Florimell was to be made in the true Florimell's image—

> In stead of yellow lockes she did deuise,
> With golden wyre to weaue her curled head.

With those curiosities, perhaps in part the product of observation, for if Elizabeth's locks could be yellow so could others;[5] there goes a piece of the purest poetry discovering the thing seen—

> And in her cheekes the vermeill red did shew
> Like roses in a bed of lillies shed.

the word "shed" perfectly describing the "soft interfusion" in the countenance of youth.[6]

[5] 'Even when fast approaching seventy years of age she is described by Hentzner (when on his well-known travels through England) as "very majestic; her face oblong, fair but wrinkled; her eyes small yet black and pleasant; her nose a little hooked; her lips narrow, and her teeth black—a defect the English seem subject to from their too liberal use of sugar; her hair amber-coloured but false (fulvum sed factitium), her hands slender; her fingers long, her stature neither tall nor short."' Edwards' "Life of Sir Walter Raleigh," vol. 1, p. 53.

[6] It is characteristically interesting to notice in verse 10 of this canto:

> but honour vertues meed
> Doth beare the fairest flowre in honorable seed.

Spenser pluming himself on his descent, his tone in these matters being different from Chaucer's. On this subject, the first verse of the Fourth Canto is explicit:

> In braue pursuit of honorable deed,
> There is I know not what great difference
> Betweene the vulgar and the noble seed,
> Which vnto things of valorous pretence
> Seemes to be borne by natiue influence;

The fourth canto is occupied with "Phaon's Tale," one of the originals of "Much Ado about Nothing." There is also the presentment of Fury and Occasion, characters that are too openly allegorical to be interesting. The battling begun in this canto is pursued in the next; Guyon fighting with Pyrochles, and Furor again being active. These rough passages lead to their opposite—the first description of the Bower of Bliss, where Cymochles is sojourning. Similarly the sixth canto, describing Phaedria and her idle lake, ends with episode of Pyrochles on fire with fury, quenching himself in vain, a happy contrast to the preceding prettiness. This second book, indeed—the Bower of Bliss book—is plentifully spattered with strenuosities. Perhaps the best fight in Spenser is that in the eighth canto between Arthur on the one side and Pyrochles and Cymochles on the other.[7] The fine and appropriate simile in verse 42 gives the sense of it:

> As saluage Bull, whom two fierce mastiues bayt,
> When rancour doth with rage him once engore.

> As feates of armes, and loue to entertaine,
> But chiefly skill to ride, seemes a science
> Proper to gentle bloud; some others faine
> To menage steeds, as did this vaunter; but in vaine.

For the praise of horsemanship as a "knightly feate" compare the "Brave Courtier" in Prosopopoia.

[7] It is curious to notice that both the Palmer and Arthur are rather sparing of the truth in speaking of Guyon's supposed dead body to Pyrochles and Cymochles. They intentionally give the impression he is dead. The Palmer is nearest downright lying (verse 13), but Arthur is far from straightforward (verse 27).

These are ideal characters, and Spenser obviously has no

for it is all exceedingly life-like, with the interest of intensity.

Not so good as this, but still good, is the fighting of Arthur and Guyon coupled, striving to win inside the House of Temperance. Their first effort is to drive off the affections that beset the body. Concerning their prowess there is an unhappy happy simile:

> For with such puissaunce and impetuous maine
> Those Champions broke on them, that forst them fly,
> Like scattered Sheepe, whenas the Shepheards swaine
> A Lyon and a Tigre doth espye,
> With greedy pace forth rushing from the forest nye.

Lions and tigers do not hunt in couples, but that does not detract from the quality of the picturesque. By way of contrast, almost immediately after, we have a comparison from observation:

> As when a swarme of Gnats at euentide
> Out of the fennes of Allan do arise,
> Their murmuring small trompets sounden wide,
> Whiles in the aire their clustring army flies,
> That as a cloud doth seeme to dim the skies;
> Ne man nor beast may rest, or take repast,
> For their sharpe wounds, and noyous iniuries,
> Till the fierce Northerne wind with blustring blast
> Doth blow them quite away, and in the *Ocean* cast.

which is picturesque too, but not romantically so—the real picturesque.

The fight in Canto 11 against the besiegers of the House of Temperance is less interesting, not more interesting than the too allegoric cantos in which it

uneasiness at the presence of this incident in a story he was free to vary at will. Cf. "Britomart," Book III., c. ii., verse 12.

occurs, its redeeming feature, Arthur and Maleger, being a plain copy of Hercules and Antæus. There is a simile, and a very bad one, comparing a flight of arrows to a water flood, but the water flood itself reads as if taken from Nature, perhaps in Ireland, rather than from Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, or Tasso.[8]

It is easy to imagine matter of more varied interest than the constant skirmishes in this canto, but the allegorical matter in this "Book of Temperance" is of very varying merit. The House of Temperance in the ninth canto tempts the poet to be dull. The House of Temperance is the Body in which dwells Alma the Soul, and the whole allegory is worked out with wearisome ingenuity.[9]

Later, in the tenth canto, in the Chamber of Memory,

[8] XI. 18:

And therewith all attonce at him let fly
Their fluttring arrowes, thicke as flakes of snow,
And round about him flocke impetuously,
Like a great water flood, that tombling low
From the high mountaines, threats to ouerflow
With suddein fury all the fertile plaine,
And the sad husbandmans long hope doth throw
A downe the streame, and all his vowes make vaine
Nor bounds nor banks his headlong ruine may sustaine.

[9] See stanzas 22 to 26 and the easier ones that come after.

V. 22:

The frame thereof seemd partly circulare,
And part triangulare, O worke diuine;
Those two the first and last proportions are,
The one imperfect, mortall, fœminine;
Th' other immortall, perfect, masculine,
And twixt them both a quadrate was the base
Proportioned equally by seuen and nine;

the knights are each given a book. Arthur reads the chronicle of Britain's knights, Guyon of Elfin lore. But these are catalogues, and even the story of Cordelia, accurately versified from Geoffrey of Monmouth, has no dramatic claim.

The far-famed seventh canto, famed for its subject, is better written, but one reader at least has always found it wanting, with too direct a moral, the imagination being used only for purposes of ornamentation. Mammon, who should be grand, for he is everywhere potent, is an uncommanding figure, and gold when

> Nine was the circle set in heauens place,
> All which compacted made a goodly diapase.

On which Mr. Henry Morley wrote, "English Writers," IX., p. 348. The circular part is the head, the triangle is formed by the legs when parted. The last proportion imperfect, a triangle that needs to be completed by the ground; mortal; and feminine because thence the continuance of the race. The first proportion, the circle, perfect; immortal, because the seat of intellect; masculine, because that sex was associated by men with intellectual power. Betwixt head and legs, the trunk, with the arms hanging by its side, "A quadrate was the base." A piece of tape will show that the proportion of a quadrate so formed is in a man of natural figure as seven to nine. "Nine was the circle set in heaven's place." The same piece of tape that reaches from the shoulders to the knuckles, as the arm hangs by the side, forming the longer side of the quadrate, exactly measures the circle of the head, the most exalted part of the human frame, "the circle set in heaven's place." Mr. Henry Morley goes on to explain the "Wandering vine" in 24 as the moustache, "and over it a faire portcullis hong," as the nose, the Porter within, as the tongue, and in 26 the "Twise sixteen Warders" as the teeth. The rest; the Steward, Diet; the Marshall, Appetite; the Clerke, Digestion; explain themselves.

heaped "as pebble stones" is not seductive. It is a poor allegory of the Temptation of Riches to show them as massed together. The critical public has judged this canto with the eye, for as a picture it is clearly effective, but the proper judge of a temptation is the feeling. In Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" we fear that we are frail; we know that we are human in the Bower of Bliss. It is not so with Mammon, possibly on account of too intimate a concern. To get money was Spenser's one great practical necessity; the appeal of female beauty was to him artistic. The one temptation is therefore coloured by imagination, the other and more sordid left to claim its victims with a glance. The very quality lacking in the description of riches is found in the description of Proserpina's trees, where the imagination is set wandering not merely in one gloomy wood, but through the world of bane.[10]

Always in Spenser, when one's interest is flagging, it is in this way refreshed by imaginative appeals, shafts of poetry, or descriptions as perfect as that of the departing angel who watched by the swooning Guyon till the Palmer appeared:

> watch thou I pray:
> For euill is at hand him to offend.
> So hauing said, eftsoones he gan display
> His painted nimble wings, and vanisht quite away;

[10] There mournfull *Cypresse* grew in greatest store,
And trees of bitter *Gall*, and *Heben* sad,
Dead sleeping *Poppy*, and blacke *Hellebore*,
Cold *Coloquintida*, and *Tetra* mad,
Mortall *Samnitis* and *Cicuta* bad.

where there is no mere statement about flight, but flight itself. And it is this quality of being the thing described that runs everywhere through Spenser's pictures of indolence and delight. We find it in canto five in the verse descriptive of the stream,

> whose murmuring waue did play
> Emongst the pumy stones.

the stream that trickled through the garden,

> *Where* Atin found Cymochles soiourning.

And equally we find it in the description of the Idle Lake and Isle, the isle from which the "litle frigot" seems to float off, as if you saw it, "the litle frigot" that carried Phaedria, herself unforgettably sketched.

But most of all we find this quality of being the thing described in the twelfth canto, a tissue of delight, where Spenser, ostensibly a moral poet, at his heart a sort of Eros, revels in "secret sensuous innocence." In this canto the excellence begins even with the journey. Appropriately, the voyage has perils all to be surpassed by the secure movement of the well-oared ship—its occupants unheeding of the siren:

> Vpon the banck they sitting did espy
> A daintie damzell, dressing of her heare.

but almost betrayed by the enticing stillness of the Mermaids bay and the music of the breakers on the haunted shore:

> With that the rolling sea resounding soft,
> In his big base them fitly answered,
> And on the rocke the waues breaking aloft,
> A solemne Meane vnto them measured,
> The whiles sweet *Zephirus* lowd whisteled
> His treble, a straunge kinde of harmony.

At length they come, nothing being forgotten, to the fairy fountain, and to the centre of the Paradise—sight and sound—the fair forms, the soft voices, the fondly loved music of water.

Spenser is the poet of the Titianesque, but as he is a poet and not a painter, he is more troubled with thoughts that intervene; and it was because he realised that beauty is not at a stay that he gazed so increasingly intently at the fleeting vision. And yet this lesson of "the lovely lay" is not written out for the reader. Rather is it the unconscious comment of the poet, who had put his trust in the perishable. The contemplation of those charms, so soon to wither, deepened in him the sadness that had been created by his love of earth:

> So passeth, in the passing of a day,
> Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre.

And this tone of submission to the law can itself be made beautiful. All his descendants know this—Keats, Rossetti, Morris, the young Tennyson—perhaps because they are disciples of Spenser, more probably because they are poets of beauty and had also to learn the one religious lesson Spenser knew.[1]

There are too many famed beauties in this canto for any enumeration. One is better known to the poetical reader than the next, and we are as familiar with the "soft trembling voices" as with the carving on the

[1] Cf. Edward Fitzgerald's version of Calderon's "Life's a Dream":

> The lover of the beauty that he knew
> Must yet dissolve to dusty residue.

Ivory Gate—Argo making her way through the Euxine Sea :

> Ye might haue seene the frothy billowes fry
> Vnder the ship, as thorough them she went,
> That seemd the waues were into yuory,
> Or yuory into the waues were sent :

These are the perfection of the merely beautiful. Another beauty, stiller and more mysterious, is in the description of the hidden self :

> Who wondrous things concerning our welfare,
> And straunge phantomes doth let vs oft forsee,
> And oft of secret ill bids vs beware;
> That is our Selfe, whom though we do not see,
> Yet each doth in him selfe it well perceiue to bee.

We have now had two books dealing with two virtues, Holiness and Temperance. Attached to them is a third dealing with Chastity, Chastity or Virginity, certainly not Asceticism or Abstinence, the ultimate purpose of Britomart, Amoret, and Florimell not being to remain unwed. As Holiness and Temperance had been represented by men, so Chastity is represented by the book of women, and thus the third and concluding book is in effective contrast with the first two. There is no falling off in interest, but the attraction is different. On the whole the first two books leave a broad allegorical impression. The hero, typical of a single virtue figures throughout, and the story is either about Redcross or Guyon. In the third book, though the allegory is interwoven, the incidents and personages are so numerously diversified and the adventures so frankly romantic that ultimately no particular allegory

is remembered. It is a romance whose heroines are Chastity, a romantic medley, and in this more like books four and six. Nevertheless the cumulative effect of the virgin pictures, Britomart, Belphœbe, Florimell, and the adventures of these three, with their general emphasis on virginity, all make for the celebration of one virtue. Besides, it is the "Book of Women," and comes as an entirely fortunate pendant to the two preceding books dealing with male heroes. Indeed, the completeness of the First Part of "The Faerie Queene" is its most surprising feature. Designedly a mere initial fragment, it displays the whole panorama, the men and the women, allegory, and the romance of adventure. In the three succeeding books there are many unsurpassed passages, but with the First Part the World Poem was written.

The opening is happily tacked on to Books I. and II., Arthur, Guyon and Redcross being immediately brought in. There are also new characters—Florimell, Timias, and Britomart, the virgin knight, carrying one of Diana's surnames. Conformably with the new tone of this book, there is at the beginning a typical romantic tournament at random—"a knight," to borrow Mr. Ker's words, "riding alone through a forest, another knight; a shock of lances; a fight on foot with swords, 'racing, tracing and foining like two wild boars'; then, perhaps, recognition—the two knights belong to the same household and are engaged in the same quest." Following upon the episode of Guyon and Britomart, there is that of Malecasta's castle, where we find

Malecasta's rule of compelling stranger knights to her love, decried by the poet in verses taken almost literally from Chaucer.[2]

We are next entertained with the story of Britomart. It comes out by going back. Britomart, the secret of whose sex has been discovered in the night surprise in Malecasta's halls, is asked by Redcross how she comes to be travelling as a knight. No part of her answer is quite truthful, and that part of it which is designed to elicit information about Artegall is wholly disingenuous. One sees here, as elsewhere in the behaviour of leading characters on critical occasions, that veracity was not the first virtue in a dangerous age. Spenser therefore has himself to take occasion to tell the reader what had really happened.

It appears that Britomart had seen the image of Artegall in a magic mirror, and, despairing of ever meeting the knight of her vision, could not rest. In vain her nurse, old Glauce, had tried to discover the cause. The girl was tormented even on the stillest nights, on nights so still that the rivers almost stopped flowing. But Glauce at length wormed her secret from her, and bade her believe that her ideal somewhere existed.

> So that at last a little creeping sleepe
> Surprisd her sense.

This account of the maiden comforted by the old woman, and lying fevered in the quiet dark, is one of the most beautiful things in poetry, a triumph of

[2] Ne may loue be compeld by maisterie.
Cf. "Franklin's Tale."

general result, for there are no verses especially beautiful; the lovely romantic effect being produced by the run of the narrative.

In Canto 4 we have Britomart's journey to the precious shore and her overthrowing of Marinell there; the story of the pursuit of Florimell is also taken up. It is a canto which, as well as any other, displays the romantic attraction of "The Faerie Queene." The picture of the love-sick Britomart—

> Sole sitting by the shores of old romance,

a situation of which Mr. Walter Crane has made use in paint; and the account of Arthur's losing Florimell by the coming on of night—these are of the essence of the picturesque. They remain forever in the memory, though the effects are received, rather than forced upon us, and are not fully written out. The imagination flies whither it will. The news of Marinell's fall is carried to his mother, the daughter of Nereus:

> Which when his mother deare did vnderstond,
> And heauy tydings heard, whereas she playd
> Amongst her watry sisters by a pond
> Gathering sweet daffadillyes.

Similarly Florimell's flight supplies the poet with one of his best similes:

> Like as a fearefull Doue, which through the raine,
> Of the wide aire her way does cut amaine,
> Hauing farre off espyde a Tassell gent,
> Which after her his nimble wings doth straine,
> Doubleth her haste for feare to be for-hent,
> And with her pineons cleaues the liquid firmament.

where there is admirably imitated the impression of pace, in the last two lines increasing pace.

There are three main sets of adventures in this book —those that concern Florimell, those that concern Belphœbe, and those of Britomart. To follow Florimell we have to skip two cantos till we find her taking refuge in the witch's hut. There is the whole of woodland romance in this description, not the less moving that we have all experienced it or can re-experience it, when we come on any cottage in a clearing.

> Through the tops of the high trees she did descry
> A little smoke, whose vapour thin and light,
> Reeking aloft, vprolled to the sky:
> Which, chearefull signe did send vnto her sight,
> That in the same did wonne some liuing wight.
> Eftsoones her steps she thereunto applyde,
> And came at last in weary wretched plight
> Vnto the place, to which her hope did guyde,
> To find some refuge there, and rest her weary syde.
>
> There in a gloomy hollow glen she found
> A little cottage, built of stickes and reedes
> In homely wize, and wald with sods around.

Any Surrey ramble will do this for us; nor are the presents of the enamoured clown such as could not be found there.

> Oft from the forrest wildings he did bring,
> Whose sides empurpled were with smiling red,
> And oft young birds, which he had taught to sing
> His mistresse prayses, sweetly caroled,
> Girlonds of flowres sometimes for her faire hed
> He fine would dight; sometimes the squirell wild
> He brought to her in bands.[3]

[3] Cf. Coridon's presents to Pastorella in Book VI., Canto IX.

> And oft, when *Coridon* vnto her brought
> Or litle sparrowes, stolen from their nest,

Florimell, in her flight from these unwelcome attentions, flees to a farther country. The witch looses after her a monstrous beast (the first appearance of the Blatant Beast), and Florimell, fleeing from it and dropping her girdle in her extremity, at length embarks in a little boat, in which there is a sleeping fisherman. In this boat the adventures are of Fairyland. Proteus appears as an insistent lover, carries her to the bottom of the sea, and there changes his shape unavailingly to woo. Marinell's mother, the sea nymph, had already (in Canto 4, it will be remembered) taken Marinell below the sea for his cure. These two passages are earnest of Spenser's feeling for the romance of the water-world, a feeling that was to have huge scope in the next book in the wedding of the Thames and the Medway.

In the middle of these adventures we have the story of Timias and Belphœbe (Cantos 5 and 6).

The Foster who had originally pursued Florimell is now pursued by Timias, whom he draws after him till he reaches his two brothers at the ford. Timias undismayed, attacks and routs the three. He is, however, left wounded, and thus found by Belphœbe, who, nursing him back to health by pouring the juice of the recently discovered tobacco plant into his wound, thereafter takes him to her home of peace in the forest.

Or wanton squirrels, in the woods farre sought,
Or other daintie thing for her addrest,
He would commend his guift, and make the best.
Yet she no whit his presents did regard,
Ne him could find to fancie in her breast.

Timias, cured of his bodily ill, becomes the prey of love fever. But his passion for one so near to Heaven is obviously hopeless, and he therefore breaks forth into self-reproaching:

> Vnthankfull wretch (said he) is this the meed,
> With which her soueraigne mercy thou doest quight?
> Thy life she saued by her gracious deed,
> But thou doest weene with villeinous despight,
> To blot her honour, and her heauenly light.
> Dye rather, dye, then so disloyally
> Deeme of her high desert, or seeme so light:
> Faire death it is to shonne more shame, to dy:
> Dye rather, dye, then euer loue disloyally.
>
> But if to loue disloyalty it bee,
> Shall I then hate her, that from deathes dore
> Me brought? ah farre be such reproch fro mee.
> What can I lesse do, then her loue therefore,
> Sith I her dew reward cannot restore?
> Dye rather, dye, and dying do her serue,
> Dying her serue, and liuing her adore;
> Thy life she gaue, thy life she doth deserue:
> Dye rather, dye, then euer from her seruice swerue.

To admit of this essential lyric the metre is not altered, no more than the metre of "The Princess" is altered to admit of "Tears, Idle Tears."

Opportunity is now taken, pursuant to the usual habit of the books of chivalry, to give an account of the nurture of Belphœbe. Belphœbe and Amoret were daughters of Chrysogone and the Sun. Venus was one day seeking the errant Cupid when she came across Diana bathing. The two goddesses join in the search, and come upon the two babes, Belphœbe and Amoret. The first Diana claims, Venus the second. Venus then

carries Amoret away with her to the garden of Adonis, and here follows no merely luxurious description, but one at once rich and grave: the serious poet's tribute to the law of earth. This garden of Adonis is the garden of increase, the place whence life comes. Milton would have chosen as president of such a garden Zeus. Spenser follows his fable without qualification. It is characteristic that he should do so, but it is equally characteristic that he should do so religiously. No ancient knelt more devoutly in the Temple of Aphrodite, for his ideal was not ascetic; he accepted nature as a thing sacred, and there was no more entranced or devout worshipper of the beauty of life. There is here, of course, his favourite doctrine of "Mutability," more curiously the doctrine of transmigration, and explicitly (mutability re-stated) the doctrine, common to many mediaevalists, of the essential permanence under changing forms.

> The substance is not chaunged, nor altered,
> But th' only forme and outward fashion;
> For euery substance is conditioned
> To change her hew, and sundry formes to don,
> Meet for her temper and complexion:
> For formes are variable and decay,
> By course of kind, and by occasion;
> And that faire flowre of beautie fades away,
> As doth the lilly fresh before the sunny ray.

With this description, at once grave and luxurious, one may compare that of Canto 10, Book IV., describing the Temple of Venus, in which Amoret came to be. There the tone is scarcely luxurious at all. To read it

is to have participated in an imagining of the Mother of Life, and to have been in her Temple. The dwelling of the bisexual goddess is on the island of Nature, no mere flower garden, but a place of peace :

> The hill, which sometimes visibly is
> Wrought with unresting energies,
> Looked idly; from the musing wood,
> And every rock, a life renewed
> Exhaled like an unconscious thought.[5]

or as Spenser himself has it—

> Fresh shadowes, fit to shroud from sunny ray;
> Faire lawnds, to take the sunne in season dew;
> Sweet springs, in which a thousand Nymphs did play;
> Soft rombling brookes, that gentle slomber drew;[6]

Britomart's adventures are more difficult to follow. They run in and out the book, from the opening contest with Guyon, through her surprise in the wanton halls and the long backward story of her love for the vision of Artegall, to the combat with Marinell in Canto 4. She is then absent till Canto 9.

Meanwhile a sub-story has been running on, the story of Satyrane and the Squire of Dames. The two are

[5] Francis Thompson, "Contemplation."

[6] At the door of the "House of Life," Book IV., Canto X., there stood two Beings,

> The one of them hight *Loue*, the other *Hate*,
> *Hate* was the elder, *Loue* the younger brother;
> Yet was the younger stronger in his state
> Then th' elder, and him maystred still in all debate.

a passage which states as succinctly as possible Spenser's continuing belief, for who could be a poet without it, in the inner goodness of the world?

joined by Sir Paridell, and the three are refused lodging in Malbecco's castle, for Malbecco is jealous of his wife Hellenore. To them, thus repulsed, a stranger knight appears, and, reinforced by the unknown unnamed, the company finally force an entrance. Inside the castle they unarm, and the stranger knight, doffing her habiliments, is discovered to be Britomart: a surprise effect from Ariosto, full weight being given to her contrasting sex. The story is then concerned with Paridell's wooing of Hellenore; Britomart and Satyrane leaving the castle and being separated from each other in the pursuit of the giant Ollyphant (Argante's brother). Whereupon there ensues Britomart's discovery of Sir Scudamour. In great distress is he, for he is unable to pass the gate of fire guarding Busyrane's castle, by which means only can he free his beloved Amoret, now captive to that enchanter.

Half the charm of Spenser's romance is its leisureliness. Britomart has time for consolatory reflections in the poet's tone. Scudamour is not alone in suffering. All suffer.

> For who nill bide the burden of distresse,
> Must not here thinke to liue: for life is wretchednesse.

Britomart, a virgin, is able to pass the wall of fire, and enters the great room, the walls of which are covered with tapestries, the room in which use is made of the motto: Be bold, be bold—be not too bold. Her experiences further include a maske of Cupid, which one forgets, and the magic binding of Amoret. Of this last it may be said that you never for a moment

believe it happened, and yet it imprints itself on the memory of imagination.

The later cantos of this book of Chastity are interrupted by two passages of a wholly different character, that dealing with the Squire of Dames and that recounting the adventures of Malbecco and Hellenore. The Squire of Dames first appears in Canto 7 as the captive of the giantess Argante, a giantess of loose life, the proper giantess to make captive that Squire. She is fleeing from the virgin knight, Palladine, with the Squire thrown across her saddle-bow. Sir Satyrane, who is near by, effects the rescue of the Squire, and Argante rushes from the story pursued by Palladine. Satyrane asks the Squire of Dames who he is, and there follows the account of his adventures among ladies, adventures in which the percentage of the chaste figures burlesquely low.

The story of Malbecco and Hellenore occupies Cantos 9 and 10. Malbecco is jealous of Hellenore, and with reason, as she elopes with Sir Paridell and is afterwards found in the Satyrs' wood. What of allegorical moral there is here, is chiefly moral by contrast—a piece of satyr insouciance, woodland moral let us say, Spenser's consciousness of the animal basis in man, a consciousness that gives feet to his idealities. Later, in the opening of Canto 11, the poet inveighs against jealousy, idly enough one thinks, as it was beyond human nature that Malbecco should not be jealous. Malbecco's state of watchful fear in the end of Canto 10 is, however, matchlessly given in a passage typical of Spenser's use

of the picturesque of situation. The thing is done, unforgettably done, by the wide imagining of the case, not by an accumulation of special felicities as in the Bower of Bliss.

The plainness of speech employed in these episodes, not to say the episodes themselves, are doubtless proof of the artificiality of Spenser's moral gentleness. But they are useful in this Book. Both give virility and life-likeness in places where one was wearying of romance, and both, by contrast, serve to emphasise the virtue which is celebrated in the story of Britomart. With all this we may compare the contrasting use made of the false Florimell. You cannot by imitation, however exact, make a real Florimell, for Chastity comes from within.

. . . . . .

The Second Part of "The Faerie Queene" is not, like the First, a Part; on the contrary, a mere fragment which might, one supposes, have been continued indefinitely. The scheme has now become so large, it is no scheme. Each book deals with any set of adventures that at the moment pleases, and, if one is to speak of their coherence with themselves, the fourth and sixth books have not even this coherency to recommend them. The fifth book alone keeps fairly steadily to its general purpose, which is partly to tell of the adventures of Artegall, partly, to write a political allegory.

The fourth is a mere run of romantic adventure. It is called the book of Friendship, but is concerned with many other matters than the friendship of Cambell and

Triamond, and there is a great deal that does not illustrate Friendship at all. The Romance, freed almost altogether of allegory, is, in the old sense, amusing to the imagination, for which reason many readers have set up a claim of preference.

The tone is no longer the same as in the first part. The adventures are boyishly romantic, but the writing is that of an older man, graver and more staid. The management of the narrative does not again become free and flowing till we come to the sixth book.

Like the other books, Book IV. tacks on to the book preceding. Britomart, who is travelling with Amoret, keeps up her sex deception, why is not easily understood, from the capriciousness of Knight Errantry perhaps. At anyrate a success of the third book is repeated in the sparkling discovery,

> With that her glistring helmet she vnlaced;
> Which doft, her golden lockes, that were vp bound
> Still in a knot, vnto her heeles downe traced,
> And like a silken veile in compasse round
> About her backe and all her bodie wound.

In this canto, too, is repeated the shock of charging knights, the tournament, if not at random, always ready, with Britomart and Amoret on the one side and Blandamour, Paridell, Duessa and Ate on the other. This is the kind of thing in which Spenser is pre-eminent—the meeting in the clearing—the space gradually filling up, after Britomart and Amoret have passed on, with Scudamour and Glauce, Sir Ferraugh, the false Florimell, and the Squire of Dames bringing his

message of the tournament that had Florimell's girdle for prize.

We are shifted from adventure to adventure till Cambell and Triamond enter with Canacee and Cambina. There is here the reference to Chaucer's "Squire's Tale" left a fragment. Spenser assumes that the story was completed by Chaucer, but that the end had been lost, and there is some very odd writing about the older poet. It is suggested that Chaucer is a heroic writer,

> With warlike numbers and Heroicke sound.

Nor is the "well of English vndefyled" a compliment very happily turned when addressed to one who is linguistically to be praised for his free employment of the inrush of French words. But Spenser may have been merely protesting against the bad Italianism of his own time.[7] Pardon is further asked of the "most sacred happie spirit" that Spenser should take up his unfinished tale. The only reason for hoping for success is

> through infusion sweete
> Of thine owne spirit, which doth in me surviue.

Spenser had read Chaucer, but here he is unashamedly using him for his own chivalric purpose.

On the principles of Book III. there is now a going back to tell the story of Cambell, and this canto telling of the past combat is a tribute to Spenser's exhaustlessness. The fight itself has a further reality than the fights in the preceding books. Conformably with this realness the similes are from observation—the missed

[7] Cf. Warton, "Observations," I., 151. 2nd Edition 1762.

swoop of the hawk[8] (for poetical purposes called a vulture), just as Spenser must often have seen it happening in the field: the Tide and River Flow meeting in the Shannon;[9] and the re-fruiting of the pruned tree that may have taken place in the poet's garden.[10] The entrance of Cambina recalls to the poet another experience of his own:

> All suddenly they heard a troublous noyes,
> That seemd some perilous tumult to desine,
> Confused with womens cries, and shouts of boyes,
> Such as the troubled Theaters oftimes annoyes.

Reading next the well arranged canto of the journey to the tournament,[1] and the tournament itself, we come to the contest for the girdle. All the fair ones are brought out in competition, and the false Florimell being adjudged the victor, the girdle of chastity will stay on her no more than on the rest—at which there is laughter from the Squire of Dames. On Amoret alone it stays, and when False Florimell is adjudged to Britomart as the victor of the tourney Britomart will not receive her.

[8] [9] [10] Canto III., verse 19, verse 27 and verse 29.

[1] In Canto V., verse 15, there is perhaps the original of Shakespeare's

> And give to dust that is a little gilt
> More laud than gilt oerdusted.

> As guilefull Goldsmith that by secret skill,
> With golden foyle doth finely ouer spred
> Some baser metall, which commend he will
> Vnto the vulgar for good gold insted,
> He much more goodly glosse thereon doth shed,
> To hide his falshood, then if it were trew:

Braggadocchio now puts forward his claim:

> Thereat exceeding wroth was *Satyran*;
> And wroth with *Satyran* was *Blandamour*;
> And wroth with *Blandamour* was *Eriuan*;
> And at them both Sir *Paridell* did loure.
> So all together stird vp strifull stoure,
> And readie were new batell to darraine.
> Each one protest to be her paramoure,
> And vow'd with speare and shield it to maintaine;

where the effect of bickering is imitatively exact. Afterwards the false Florimell, being left free, choses Braggadocchio.

In all this there is something satirical, different in tone from the earlier books of the poem, a touch of the cynical observer. At the end there is a piece of more usual Spenser in the allegory of the House of Care,

> Those be vnquiet thoughts, that carefull minds inuade.

But even the landscape is now elderly:

> Vnder a steepe hilles side it placed was,
> There where the mouldred earth had cav'd the banke;
> And fast beside a little brooke did pas
> Of muddie water, that like puddle stanke,
> By which few crooked sallowes grew in ranke:

In Canto VI. it is surprising what interesting use is made of old machinery; almost the tournament at random—for Scudamour is surprised that, even after the recognition, Artegall should withdraw—and the re-introduction of Britomart:

> Whiles thus they communed, lo farre away
> A Knight soft ryding towards them they spyde.

In the fight, Britomart's sex is again discovered.

Mutual explanations follow. Britomart has lost Amoret in the forest, and she and Scudamour set off in quest. The story then goes back to relate Amoret's adventures with the wild man. Belphœbe joins in the chase, but resents the pity her squire, Timias, bestows on the wounded girl. Timias falls into disgrace, and there follows a shadowed account of Raleigh's fondness for the Maid of Honour and his falling out of favour with Elizabeth. The dove that effects the reconcilement is Spenser himself. One is amused at the boldness of the allegory:

> She sitting by him as on ground he lay,
> Her mournefull notes full piteously did frame,
> And thereof made a lamentable lay,
> So sensibly compyld, that in the same
> Him seemed oft he heard his owne right name.

Yet in the whole "Faerie Queene" there is nothing more perfect than this courtier-like performance. It is perfection this pleading of Spenser's for his friend, under the guise of a dove, perfection diplomatically and equally perfection poetically. We have here perhaps no addition to the literature of the world, but an unrivalled triumph of skill.

For some time after this we are entertained with knight errantry—the adventures of Amyas and Æmilia, Placidas and Pœana, but there is little beyond the pleasing run of the story till we come to Scudamour's account of how he first found Amoret in the Temple of Venus, of which one line gives the tone:

> For all the Priests were damzels, in soft linnen dight.

Here, too, in all this gracious speaking of the mother of life the voice is elderly.[2]

Another masterpiece succeeds, Canto 11 being occupied with the wedding of the Thames and the Medway. There are one or two especially pretty verses, but, in the main, nothing stands out from the rest. The whole gives sign of a new kind of imagination in Spenser, not particular nor so picturesque as formerly, but more taking a view of a whole. The conception of the River World is as fine as in the last canto was the conception of the Stream of Life. Let us not blind ourselves to this by speaking of a catalogue—the strange thing is that the impression comes out in a catalogue. Mr. Bridges in his "Eros and Psyche" has re-attempted a list of Spenser's sea-nymphs, but while Mr. Bridges surpasses Spenser in his musical arrangement of Greek names, Spenser flows more easily, without giving the impression even of an accomplished task—for it was no task to him.[3]

It would be recognised, if I had been more careful to tell the whole detailed story of this book, that there is no central narrative. It begins with Britomart and ends with Marinell. It occupies itself with the adventures of Amoret, and Florimell the false, and ends with Florimell the true. Cambell and Triamond, about whom the book proposes to be, vanish in the middle from the

[2] This allegory was admired by Steele in a rather jejune paper. ("Tatler," 194.)

[3] The actual bringing together of Marinell and Florimell is pretty but of a more common order of excellence.

stage. The number of subsidiary, even episodical, characters is very large—Blandamour, Paridell, Ferraugh, The Squire of Low Degree, a dwarf, a giant, a giant's daughter, a wild man. Artegall himself in this book is episodically introduced.

Moreover, leaving out of account the famous episodes, the rich overflow of poetical language has suffered sensible abatement. One is much less tempted to quote. The similes, in the main, are poorer; while one finds oneself stumbling over frequent slips, signs that the book was probably not written as a whole, but taken up for a space and then laid down.[4] As to the three episodes, they are wonderful, but they are wonderful in a new way. The allegory of Timias, the Temple of Venus, the Wedding of the Thames and Medway—one praises the Art without being absolutely

[4] In Canto II. of this book the girdle of Florimell the true is said to be in Satyrane's possession. In Book III., Canto VIII., verse 2, it was stated that the Witch's Beast had got it. In Canto VI., verse 39, of this Book Spenser has forgotten what he told us in verse 13, that Britomart's horse was slain. In the eighth verse of Canto VII. of this Book, speaking of Amoret, he forgets he is not speaking of Florimell. In Canto IX., verse 10, of this Book Pœana can hardly distinguish her own Squire of Dames from the Squire of Low Degree. There was no likeness earlier, for in Canto VIII. Æmilia had no such difficulty.

In verse 38, Canto IX., of this Book Spenser, while Scudamour is still bewailing the loss of Amoret, forgets that she is present, but in the fourth verse of Canto X. he has remembered.

In verse 16 of Canto X. of this Book we are told that the Warden Danger had frightened many before Scudamour, but none before Scudamour had ever penetrated beyond the outer line of defence furnished by the twenty knights.

taken captive. One has to stop and consider and admire; one is not overwhelmed with delight. The real attraction of the book is its air of loose romance.

In the Fifth Book Spenser returns to allegorising, but it is no longer a general allegory; Artegall is Lord Grey, and his ruthless and admired methods are those of his prototype. The truth is Spenser as an allegorist had said his say with the First Part, and when he desires in the Second Part to take up allegory again he has to turn back to facts known to him. That or the mere run of knightly adventure is the choice left. The Second Part was not conceived as a part, but consists of separate books strung together; in proof we have already had Artegall alone. Here he never appears but with his iron man Talus in attendance, but when Book IV. was written Talus as a companion had not been thought of. In himself he is a good introduction from legend, the flail being Spenser's own invention, and though not so good as Una or as natural as the Palmer, more striking than the latter. He is not human, however, and the easy victories of this character sacrifice the interest of the story to the allegory of the invulnerability of Justice.

The Book opens spiritedly—Spenser's complaint against his own time, a complaint he always made with spirit. With the First Canto, Artegall (whose business is to redeem Irenae from Grantorto, that is Ireland from Desmond) appears with Talus, and there is the story of the beheaded lady, a well told tale straight out of the old romances, Palmerin, Amadis or another; the

villain being pursued by Talus in verses as speedy as his feet. There follows the adventure with Pollente on the bridge—where some reference to political events is clearly intended—the complete destruction of Pollente's castle and the cutting off of his daughter's hands being meant as an illustration, and curiously as a justificatory illustration, of Lord Grey's "frightfulness" in Ireland.

We come now to the most striking episode in Spenser, a satire on Communism, the meeting with the giant with the balances who would restore earth to equality and re-weigh all. Artegall, or Spenser, arguing, is the eternal satisfied, and his philosophy the true philosophy of Conservatism. Later, there is another outrush of aristocratic sentiment in the treatment meted out to the rascal many. All this is neither here nor there, dead politics and a dead point of view, yet the picture of the giant with the balances is one to live forever in the imagination:

> There they beheld a mighty Gyant stand
> Vpon a rocke, and holding forth on hie
> An huge great paire of ballance in his hand,
> With which he boasted in his surquedrie,
> That all the world he would weigh equallie,
> If ought he had the same to counterpoys.
> For want whereof he weighed vanity,
> And fild his ballaunce full of idle toys:
> Yet was admired much of fooles, women, and boys.

One does not particularly know why it should live forever; it does so, like the ogre with two heads in one's first nursery book. There are inventions of the fancy so striking—The Scarlet Letter, Othello's Sword

of Spain—that nothing can erase them from the memory of mankind.

We proceed to the tournament at the spousals of Marinell and Florimell. Artegall winning in Braggadocchio's armour, Braggadocchio is acclaimed victor, but declines to pay homage to the Lady of the Tourney. His own lady is fairer, and to prove this he brings in his own. Finally, Florimell the True is brought in to confound the False. She is blushing, for she had been shamed:

> So forth the noble Ladie was ybrought,
> Adorn'd with honor and all comely grace:
> Whereto her bashfull shamfastnesse ywrought
> A great increase in her faire blushing face;
> As roses did with lillies interlace.

The girdle that would fit none (Spenser forgets it did fit Amoret) fits Florimell the true, and after Guyon has claimed his horse from Braggadocchio that worthy is disgraced and disarmed. The tone, it will be perceived, is harder than formerly. Braggadocchio, a mere mirth provoking character whom we have got to like, is dismissed with inappropriate severity. Spenser was tired of comic creation, for which reason we meet no more with the Squire of Dames.

Still another side adventure is the story of Brasidas and Amidas:

> Then did my younger brother *Amidas*
> Loue that same other Damzell, *Lucy* bright.

It is worth notice that Artegall's judgment is wholly wrong. What land the sea attaches to my land is mine by custom, but this custom does not extend to

young women floating on a box, nor even to the identifiable possessions that the lost box contains. Romance does not ask for the precision of law, but surely all this is merely filling up. If it was meant as a tribute to Lord Grey's discernment, it is clumsier than the revived Solomon's judgment in Canto I.

Proceeding, Artegall rescues Sir Terpine from the people of Queen Radegund. Terpine tells how she sets the knights she vanquishes to the despised tasks of women:

> To spin, to card, to sew, to wash, to wring;

and the monosyllabic enumeration makes them seem despicable enough. In the scuffle at the canto's end Radegund assails the rescued Terpine. Artegall flies to his relief, and if Radegund had not escaped the downrushing sword,

> It had depriu'd her mother of a daughter,

the only instance of sheer bathos and ludicrosity in the whole interminable "Faerie Queene."

In the next canto Artegall is made the victim of his own clemency, and, throwing away his sword in a pet at having defaced a woman, is enslaved by the recovering Radegund who has Terpine hanged.

Artegall's conduct is meant to emphasise that Lord Grey was naturally clement; moreover, it was part of the pretence that Radegund was Mary of Scotland and that Mary of Scotland had been generously dealt with. Further, firstly there is an allegory of Lord Grey's early attitude to Mary, and secondly an implied statement that clemency, if adopted, leads to worse evils than

those severity inflicts. As to Terpine, he was a good character, and had already been rescued by the hero, so that, according to all the canons of fable, he should have been rescued again, even to seventy times seven. But Spenser had no further use for him, and it is mentioned here only as a sure sign of flagging.

Later, the poet is indignant that his Achilles should be condemned to the tasks of a woman's slave:

> Such is the crueltie of womenkynd,
> When they haue shaken off the shamefast band,
> With which wise Nature did them strongly bynd,
> T' obay the heasts of mans well ruling hand,
> That then all rule and reason they withstand,
> To purchase a licentious libertie.
> But vertuous women wisely vnderstand,
> That they were borne to base humilitie,
> Vnlesse the heauens them lift to lawful soueraintie.

where the wise exception is that of the courtier who recalled the instance of Elizabeth.

A situation new to "The Faerie Queene," though common in the romances, is where Clarinda, trying to persuade Artegall to love Radegund, herself falls in love with him. But little poetical use is made of it, beyond the exquisite line where Radegund tells Clarinda to use all enticing arts:

> Armies of louely lookes, and speeches wise.

The supreme incident is an excursion into the fluent picturesque of which Spenser was so fond. Talus carries news to Britomart of Artegall's mishap. The longing girl in her empty castle sees the messenger approach, but no quotation will illustrate a situation

that comes out in the run of the narrative, and remains in the memory with Spenser's most marvellous effects:

> One day, when as she long had sought for ease
> In euery place, and euery place thought best,
> Yet found no place, that could her liking please,
> She to a window came, that opened West,

One turns back in vain to discover what particular beauties have so impressed one. It is again the picturesque of situation.

In the side episode of Isis Church, in the Egyptian or uncouth setting there is some exercise of imagination, but the poet has not much more to say than that the priests who prophesied were priests of Isis. The machinery is novel, but it is machinery. There is here nothing near to Spenser's heart, as in his description of Venus's Temple or The Garden of Adonis.

The canto ends with the defeat of Radegund by Britomart. Artegall is now free to pursue his quest, but the book is not to end yet, and he has more adventures by the way. Consequently two cantos are devoted to the adventures of the Lady Samient and the Soldan (Philip of Spain). The Lady Samient was a lady of Mercilla's court, so that ultimately we come to hear Mercilla trying Duessa, or, in other words, Elizabeth's judgment on Mary.

The adventures are stock romance[5]—the familiar

[5] Artegall meets a damzell (the lady Samient, as it turns out) fleeing from two Pagan knights who are pursued by a third knight. Artegall engages and slays the foremost of the two

tournament at random, the fight between Arthur and the Soldan, and the slaying of Guile. We notice the intrusion of familiar Greek Myths into Spenser's Gothic Fable as signs that he was weary of remembering Don Quixote's library. The judgment of Solomon in the opening was another pillage of the familiar.

The last three cantos are plain political allegory—the expedition to the Netherlands (Leicester commanding, in 1585), the restoration of Belge, Henry of Navarre and his acceptance of Catholicism, the lady Fleur de Lis, who is naturally found in connection with Burbon, the lady Irenae and the putting down of Desmond's rebellion.

These cantos keep the pedestrian level of the cantos occupied with fighting, and have little poetically memorable. There is a pretty simile taken from the garden of the Lady Irenae's appearance when, expecting to be slain, she saw her champion approach :

pagans. The rearmost turns on Arthur, for it was Arthur who was pursuing, and is slain by him. Arthur, rushing on after his victory and thinking Artegall the other Paynim, engages him, an engagement fortunately stopped by the explanations of the damzell.

The lady Samient tells her tale—the Soldan was to blame. The ensuing fight between Arthur and the Soldan is very well told, and, what is a wonder after so many fights, newly. For new material Spenser borrows Hippolytus and his chariot, and the Soldan, after battling in this car, shares the fate, somewhat varied, of Phaedra's beloved.

They all would now journey to Mercilla's court, but the lady Samient tells them of the bad behaviour of Guile, to whose lodging they turn aside. Guile changes his shapes as rapidly as Proteus, and is slain ultimately as a hedgehog trying to become a snake.

Like as a tender Rose in open plaine,
That with vntimely drought nigh withered was,
And hung the head, soone as few drops of raine
Thereon distill, and deaw her daintie face,
Gins to looke vp, and with fresh wonted grace
Dispreds the glorie of her leaues gay.

One does not know whether these last cantos are spoilt for us by the constantly intrusive particular and political references. One does not care for them: on the other hand, without them, such as they are, there is very little in the cantos. Doubtless for the Elizabethans they added interest, and perhaps Lord Burleigh did not know that the fifth was the weakest book in "The Faerie Queene." The imagination is least free in it, and, opening grandly with the Giant of the balances, it gets to be perfunctory writing at the end.

In this book as in the fourth there are many hurried slips of plot memory.[6] Other instances of a different

[6] In the Third Canto of this Book Spenser forgets that the true Florimell is not absent, but has only turned aside. In the same Canto Artegall rescues Marinell from 100 knights, an absurdity of odds not congruous with other incidents in the story, which on this head is always reasonable. For instance, in Book IV., c. IX., Britomart and Scudamour are hard put to it to defeat Blandamour, Paridell and two others when Arthur arrives opportunely to help Britomart and Scudamour.

In Canto III., verse 28, of this Book Spenser tells us that the girdle that fits Florimell the true had never been found to fit before, forgetting that in Book IV., Canto V., it had fitted Amoret. In Canto VI. of this Book, when Britomart is in the house of the deceitful Dolon, she lies down on her bed inside her room. Outside the bed-chamber Talus keeps guard. Britomart's bed is let down on a trap to the floor beneath. Two villain

kind are occasions where Spenser forgets his ideal purpose—Artegall, to escape from Radegund's clutches, makes a false promise of love to Clarinda; Arthur, safely to enter the Soldan's castle, clothes himself, in unknightly fashion, in the armour of one of the Soldan's dead followers; as earlier in the story (Book IV., Canto 9), to enter the castle of the giant, he had propped up the giant's dead body on a horse and pretended that the giant was returning victorious with prisoners. These are the actions, not of saints, but of Elizabethan captains, and they mean that Spenser no longer always remembers to keep his story at ideal pitch. Let us consider to what these conclusions amount.

Spenser begins the Second Part of "The Faerie Queene" with his idea of a general allegory of human life grown dim to him. In the "Book of Friendship," his Fourth Book and the first of the Second Part, he takes refuge in pure romance, a development we had noticed beginning, but only beginning, in the "Book of Chastity" before the First Part was complete. The "Book of Chastity" is helped by its air of loose romance to be not merely a "Book of Chastity," and thus to afford delight of an additional kind. But the "Book of Friendship" depends on its air of loose romance; so much so as to be scarcely a "Book of Friendship" at all.

knights then come to the door of that lower room to slay her, and the guarding Talus attacks them. Spenser forgets that Talus had been left in the passage on the upper storey.

In his Fifth Book, the "Book of Justice," Spenser, for allegorical material, is reduced to a veiled record of actual happenings. It is true that what would be the monotonous account of Lord Grey's justicings is eked out by a device used formerly—a female introduction. Radegund and her amazons, and the longing Britomart, help the Fifth Book in the same way that the third "Book of Women" helps the first two books, and provide a similar relief to the monotone. But this is no more to say than that Spenser comes to the relief of Spenser. In his main scheming of the Fifth Book he is no longer chiefly dependent on imagining.

With the Sixth Book the story lifts again, and we have a masterpiece fit to rank with the first three. In some ways it is the most charming of all. We are rid of the pressed allegory, always distasteful to some readers; the adventure is more fluent than in either of the first two books, and yet it is not mere adventure. A new interest has come into Spenser's life, and beyond the shifting panorama of romance the song heard is that of mating. What was peculiar in Spenser is perhaps best expressed here, his fondness for the romance of life, his love of life's loveliness. What is missing that we get elsewhere is his consciousness of virtue. Missing also are the grand episodes of the Fourth and Fifth Books. There is no giant with the balances, no wedding of waters, no Temple of Venus. To make up for their absence we have the presence of Pastorella, three cantos of the purest Spenserism, and totally different from the work of any other poet.

In the proem Spenser begins to find the task tedious, and says so:

> The waies, through which my weary steps I guyde,
> In this delightful land of Faery,
> Are so exceeding spacious and wyde,
> And sprinckled with such sweet variety,
> Of all that pleasant is to eare or eye,
> That I nigh rauisht with rare thoughts delight,
> My tedious trauell doe forget thereby;
> And when I gin to feele decay of might,
> It strength to me supplies, and chears my dulled spright.

The rare thoughts with which he was ravished, or at least the newer portion of them, were doubtless side thoughts of his Elizabeth. In the first canto we have the story of the Lady Briana, a brightly told episode, more romantic than the books of romance. The Lady Briana loved the Knight Crudor in vain. The unwilling knight will never marry her, at least never till she has found the country East of the Sun and West of the Moon, ridden Godiva-wise through the city, or made him a cloak lined with the hair of ladies and the beards of knights. This condition never-to-be-fulfilled, has usually, as its concomitant in the romances, a heroine willing to fulfil it. In this instance, however, it is Calidore who finally puts the business right and grants Crudor his life on condition he marries the Lady Briana; Maleffort, her agent in plucking hair and beards, having been already slain. We may remark some crudity of Gothic fancy. Briana was a "good" character, and therefore would not so have employed anyone. So, having employed Maleffort, she became a "bad" char-

acter, and should have shared his fate. Her subsequent marriage with Crudor is not meant as a fitting punishment. In the next canto we find the stripling Tristram,

> All in a woodman's iacket he was clad
> Of Lincolne greene,

slaying an armed knight. Calidore, conformably with the aristocratic tone of the story, demands the reason of his presumption, and is told that the knight now slain had abused a lady, driving her before him prodding her with a spear. Originally this lady had been the knight's beloved, but journeying together through the forest they had come

> Within a wood, whereas a Ladie gent
> Sate with a knight in ioyous iolliment
> Of their franke loues.

Sir Aladine and Priscilla to wit. The slain knight immediately preferred Priscilla, and, failing to capture her from the unarmed Sir Aladine, was venting his spite on his own lady, when Tristram met him and gave him his death-blow. Satisfied with this explanation, Sir Calidore goes in search of Priscilla and the wounded Sir Aladine, and conveys them to their respective homes.

Afterwards, setting out again, Calidore comes upon Sir Calepine and Serena maying, as erst Priscilla and Sir Aladine. Their loves are interrupted by the Blatant Beast (Slander), who would carry Serena off, but on the onset of Calidore drops her to be revived by Sir Calepine. Calidore, pursuing the monster, runs out of the Book, *his* Book till the ninth canto.

We then pursue the adventures of Calepine and his lady, a side episode, but surely the most romantic that ever decorated fiction. Coming to a ford, and embarrassed by the wounded Serena, Calepine begs help from the churlish Sir Turpine, a person wholly different from the Sir Terpine whom Radegund hanged. All these happenings with the churlish knight, the picture of the mocker on the bank, and the two struggling with the stream, are as good romance as is to be found anywhere in the world's literature. Adventures crowd upon each other and, seeming to come from nowhere, have the entertainment of the unpredictable. The story goes on to tell of the rescue of Sir Calepine by the Salvage Man, who is, by the way and as of course, really of gentle blood. The descriptive power here is of a brilliance that is bewildering. The account of the attack on the armed knight by the unarmed salvage and of the knight's ultimate panic as the naked and undefeatable fanatic continues to hurl himself upon him, is as wonderful as that of the adventures at the ford. To bring this episode to a resting place, the salvage conveys the rescued pair to his cave of the simple life, the extreme simplicity of effect being heightened by an unusually bare line:

> And the frutes of the forrest was their feast:

A little later, wearying of his life in the cave, Calepine wanders in the wood, and there chases a Bear carrying a child; the whole episode of the Bear and the child, the adopting mother, and the "wandered" Knight being from the land of Faëry. These two cantos, in fact, the

third and fourth, define better than any treatise what is meant by Romance. No wonder men of letters love them. The mature reader gets again the same pleasure as the child from his first "Picture Book."

Sir Calepine, in chase of the Bear, having now, like Calidore, run out of the story till the end of the eighth canto, there is room for a tissue of adventure.

Serena despairs of the return of Sir Calepine, and setting out with the Salvage Man, is met by Arthur and Timias. It appears that Timias, though forgiven by Belphœbe, had been bitten by the Blatant Beast, or, in other words, touched by scandal, and now the four go together to the dwelling of a hermit, where Serena and Timias are left to be cured of their wounds. The wounds of Slander can be cured by heavenly contemplation, or, if not by that, by withdrawal from the world.[7]

Arthur and the Salvage Man depart; and, some time after, Serena and Timias, being cured, pay farewell to the Hermit. Journeying together, it chanced that they met

> a faire Mayden clad in mourning weed,
> Vpon a mangy iade vnmeetely set,
> And a lewd foole her leading thorough dry and wet.

But before anything can be told us of this character we are spirited off to learn how Arthur dealt out justice to the churlish Turpine, an account which is needlessly detailed.[8] This accomplished, we are spirited back

[7] Cf. The Bandello story and the conclusion of "Much Ado about Nothing."

[8] The adventures of Arthur with Sir Turpine, Blandina and Sir Enias—Arthur, melted by the lady's blandishments, forgives Sir

again to Timias, Serena, and Mirabella, for it was she, enduring her penance on her jade. Mirabella had made men enamoured and left them to perish of their love, and now by Cupid's sentence is doomed to travel endlessly till she has saved as many lives as she had destroyed. Meanwhile the Foole whips her and her jade by turns, and the Carle, who leads the horse and is a sort of giant, also abuses her. Poor Timias, moved by pity, intervenes, only to be added to the number of the whipped, while Serena in dismay flees to the forest. This episode, though as Gothic as Briana's, touches on manners sufficiently closely not to be easily forgotten. In the middle ages the thoughts

Turpine, but is attacked on his homeward journey by two apparently errant knights. One Arthur slays, the other, Sir Enias, he unhorses and is about to kill, when Sir Enias tells him that he was set on to attack him by a false tale of Turpine's. But how the mere fact that he was at Arthur's mercy could prove that the tale he had been told was false must be left to speculation. In fact, being in danger of his life, he sold his master, for Spenser has just told us (Canto VII., verse 5) that the knights believed all Turpine said was true. Conformably with this view of his character, he afterwards induces Turpine by a lie to venture into the neighbourhood of Arthur, so that ultimately the master rogue is left hanging by his heels to a tree.

What is curious here is the notice taken, or rather not taken, of the behaviour of Sir Enias. Arthur, the ideal knight, is satisfied and so is Spenser, for he speaks of him favourably in verse 4 of Canto VIII., and employs him as a good volunteer in the combat with the captors of Timias. It is obvious either that, when he was first introduced, no good employment had been thought of, or that Spenser, in using him as the instrument for bringing Turpine to book, had forgotten to invent a justification for his changing sides.

of males determined the tone of thought, and the "cruel beauty" was the frequent subject of reproach. Spenser had his own quarrel with his Rosalind, that is to say he must have been rejected by one or several, and it may have pleased him, as it must have pleased his age, to visit poetical justice on the unyielding lady. Complaints of this kind and incidents in illustration were the stock material of the books of chivalry. The masculine point of view is easily adopted by male poets. Mirabella, doubtless, was as heartless a coquette as Tennyson's Lady Clara!

Another episode ensues, less fantastic, but equally unforgettable. Serena fleeing, has fallen among Salvages, and is about to be made a naked sacrifice of when rescued by Calepine. The emphasis is not wholly on the surface. There is an atmosphere of savagery, blood and darkness, lit by the sacred fire of the cannibals, an atmosphere of terror, mingled with which there is something appealing, the frail body of the victim standing out against the wildness of the wood.

As to all these incidents, eminently striking as they are, one feels they are getting very discursive. The characters change frequently, the separate adventures are short and the story becomes a panorama. It is as if the great Romanticist, before bidding farewell to romance, had let his imagination fly through his storied memory at will.

Before bidding formal farewell, however, for what now follows is not so much romance as an epithalamium in a romantic setting, Spenser sees his own love story

in the colours of his poetical task. Calidore has not yet caught the Blatant Beast, but chasing it, he comes upon shepherds and Pastorella. For accessories there are Melibee, the reputed father, for really, and as of course, Pastorella is of gentle birth, and the shepherd lover Coridon. Than this canto there is nothing more lovely—a cool and gentle air. Calidore, after his labours, comes to the quiet villages, and

> to the folds, where sheepe at night doe seat,
> And to the litle cots, where shepherds lie
> In winters wrathfull time,

and it is in these surroundings that he sees his future bride. Later, in conversation with the knight, Melibee praises the simple life:

> Me no such cares nor combrous thoughts offend,
> Ne once my minds vnmoued quiet grieue,
> But all the night in siluer sleepe I spend,
> And all the day, to what I list, I doe attend,[9]

But, when Calidore entranced exclaims that he too would wish permanently so to live, old Melibee tells him to be content with the knightly condition assigned to him by heaven. All states are fortunate to the contented heart:

> It is the mynd, that maketh good or ill,
> That maketh wretch or happie, rich or poore.

Meanwhile Calidore prospers in his suit; poor Coridon, though, like the witch's son when propitiating Florimell, endeavouring to shine with country gifts, fading before the prowess of the Knight.

[9] Cf. Erminia and the Shepherd, *Jerusalem*, Book VII.

The love story moves to a Bower of Bliss—no fiction of Armida's garden this time, but "warm life as now she stands." There is a human being on the fairy hill where birds and hawk agree, at the foot whereof the water plays its recurrent music. Calidore, himself unperceived, sees the Maidens,

> All raunged in a ring, and dauncing in delight

to someone's piping. Within that ring were three others—the Graces—and in the midst a girl:

> She was to weete that iolly Shepheards lasse,
> Which piped there vnto that merry rout,
> That iolly shepheard, which there piped, was
> Poore *Colin Clout* (who knowes not *Colin Clout?*)
> He pypt apace, whilest they him daunst about.
> Pype iolly shepheard, pype thou now apace
> Vnto thy loue, that made thee low to lout:
> Thy loue is present there with thee in place,
> Thy loue is there aduaunst to be another Grace.

This is a side insertion, an insertion that turns directly to the fact. Returning to the story Calidore makes conquest of *his* Pastorella by his bravery with the Tiger.

The last effort of imagination is the Brigand band that carries Pastorella off, the robber chieftain, of course, falling in love with her, and, of course also, himself being finally slain, while Pastorella, equally of course, is finally rescued by Calidore. What remains is that she should be restored to her princely parents, contributing to which end there is the familiar strawberry mark of nursery tale. There is space left to tell us that Calidore binds the Blatant Beast, bonds subsequently to be broken, for slander never dies.

Only a few stanzas of this book deal specifically with Colin, but indirectly the whole book is concerned with his affairs. It is the prettiest exercise of Spenser-Eros, now turning a little grey, that is to say, the most delicate and lightest touched of all the world's fancies of sensuous love.[10]

Always printed with "The Faerie Queene" are two

[10] In this Book also there are one or two slips of memory. E.g. In Canto V., verse 8, it is narrated that the Salvage man clothed himself in the armour Calepine left behind him:

> His shield, his helmet, and his curats bare.
> But without sword upon his thigh to sit:
> Sir *Calepine* himself *away had hidden it.*

Why? We are not told either here or later. Spenser must have intended, and afterwards forgotten, to found something on this hiding of the sword. Moreover, when Sir Calepine turns up again (for the rescue of Serena, Canto VIII., 47) he has his arms, though he had started on his adventure (that of the Bear and the Babe, Canto IV.) without them.

In the "Faerie Queene," and with increasing frequency in the later books, the "good" characters make use of deceit—e.g., in Canto III. Priscilla, the daughter of a neighbouring lord, had been maying with Sir Aladine. The question is how to get her back to her family with her good name untouched. Calidore goes to the carcase of the knight he had slain, and, having cut off his head, carries it with Priscilla to her father. His story is that she was being forcibly abducted by this dead man, from whom he had rescued her. In Canto IV. (Sir Calepine's adventure with the Bear and the Babe) Sir Bruin's good lady has no hesitation (verse 38) in lying to Sir Bruin, who desired an heir, about his paternity of the adopted child; and in Canto VI. the perfect knight, Arthur, having entered Sir Turpine's castle, pretends he is an errant knight in great need, a deceit which was superfluous to the story, for, as it turns out, it was quite immaterial to his success.

other cantos, which deal with Mutability. Perhaps, according to the conjecture of the 1609 folio, in which they were first printed, they were meant to form part of a further book dealing with Constancy. Perhaps they were meant merely as an episode to be inserted somewhere or anywhere in good time. It is easy to believe that some of the other famous insertions were written episodically, to be afterwards discovered in a fitting place in the narrative. Anyhow, fragment though they are, those cantos yield in interest to no others, for they are occupied entirely with Spenser's central doctrine of the Mutability of things.

Mutability, personified as a woman, arraigns the gods because worship is paid to them as supreme, whereas, in fact, it is she who is actual mistress of all, or bears rule over all. In the main, however, this first, or as it is called sixth, canto is not very moving, the most arresting part being the account of Diana in the stream, with the lovely verse describing the bribes offered by Faunus to Molanna:

> No way he found to compasse his desire,
> But to corrupt *Molanna*, this her maid,
> Her to discouer for some secret hire:
> So, her with flattering words he first assaid;
> And after, pleasing gifts for her purvaid,
> Queene-apples, and red Cherries from the tree.

This essay, in Spenser's favourite manner of the Titianesque, appearing so incongruously in these solemn cantos, reminds one how much all his days he was impressed by the lovely—religiously impressed. The life

he worshipped was the life that appears in the next canto:

> But *Life* was like a faire young lusty boy,
> Such as they faine *Dan Cupid* to haue beene,
> Full of delightfull health and liuely ioy.

A full expression of this worship, though still permitted, by modern manners, to the brush, is now forbidden to the pen. There is, therefore, no good painting of nymphs in modern poetry, where the uneasiness of the reader communicates itself to the poet. But Spenser's descriptions seldom disquiet us any more than a painting by Titian, or they disquiet us only if, in a stubborn modernity, we refuse to understand the nature of his Art. It is the picturesque, the merely descriptive, and if the medium of words seems to speak to us less privately than the medium of form, at least in Spenser's hands it does not intend to tell us more. It was Thomas Campbell who compared Spenser to Rubens, not entirely happily, for Rubens did not paint the eternal feminine, but women of his time, and Spenser is as sage and serious as Titian. But Campbell, with his poet's instinct, seizes the main point, and sees that what Spenser does painters have always been encouraged to attempt.

The great Mutability canto is the second or, as it is called, the seventh, that which contains the lengthy pleading of Mutability before Dame Nature seated on a hill, a situation which expressly reminds the poet of Chaucer's Nature in his "Parlement of Foules."[1] All

[1] It is amusing that Spenser should familiarly suggest that Alan Delille was an invention of the older writer's, and that Chaucer

bow to her empire but the recalcitrant Mutability, for it is she, herself, as she sets out in her pleading, she, alone, who has justly claim to universal sway.

> Ne is the water in more constant case;
> Whether those same on high, or these belowe.
> For, th' Ocean moueth stil, from place to place;
> And euery Riuer still doth ebbe and flowe:

All is movement—months, seasons, life itself: the unending process continues.

To me it seems Mutability makes out her case, but Nature is not willing to yield her sovereignty. She gives two reasons for not doing so. The first is not too clear:

> I well consider all that ye haue sayd,
> And find that all things stedfastnes doe hate
> And changed be: yet being rightly wayd
> They are not changed from their first estate;
> But by their change their being doe dilate:
> And turning to themselues at length againe,
> Doe worke their owne perfection so by fate:

What Spenser means and obscurely expresses is that change and decay are concomitants of our mortal and imperfect condition, but that some day in eternity change and decay will fall away from life, and everlasting life remain. And the thing that is thus to remain must not be merely the thing as changed and decayed by earthly time, but the thing in its perfection. But again, it was at the first, according to Spenser, that there *was* perfection, the other religious belief, which he

needed a cover for the audacity, now his own, of picturing the Mother of Life—no genuine doubt possibly, perhaps a poet's suggestion for the purpose of fastening the attention of the reader.

held in common with his doctrine of Mutability, being a firm and enduring faith in a golden age. It was in the beginning that there was the Paradisal State, and when we reach the Seventh Heaven we shall have worked back, or to follow Spenser's argument more closely, worked through, to the perfection from which we came.

The second reason is simpler. Nature will not give up her empire to Mutability, for the reign of Mutability is not for ever. All things will come to final rest;

> Cease therefore daughter further to aspire,
> And thee content thus to be rul'd by me:
> For thy decay thou seekst by thy desire;
> But time shall come that all shall changed bee,
> And from thenceforth, none no more change shall see.

the hope that poets have entertained of a completed quietness from the time when Virgil drew fondly his picture of sleep at night,[2] to the aspiration of Tennyson in his "St. Agnes Eve."[3]

A poem written between the publication of the first part of "The Faerie Queene" and the completion of the Second Part is "Colin Clouts Come Home Again." The poem is dated, in the dedication to Sir Walter Raleigh, December 27, 1591, but was not published till 1595 with "Astrophel," and almost certainly was revised before publication.

[2] "Aeneid," IV., 522-528:

> Nox erat, et placidum carpebant fessa soporem
> Corpora per terras; silvaeque et saeva quierant
> Æquora.

[3]

> The Sabbaths of Eternity
> One Sabbath deep and wide.

When "Astrophel" was written we do not know. It is a collection of poems on Sidney, who had died in 1586. The first poem is called "Astrophel," the second "The Mourning Muse of Thestylis," and the third, which is signed L. B.,[4] "A Pastoral Aeglogue upon the death of Sir Philip Sidney." There is a poem called "An Elegy," and two shorter poems called Epitaphs. No one supposes Spenser to have written any but the first. Some of the poems not by him had appeared in "The Phoenix Nest" in 1593, and it is not likely that Spenser's own, a pastoral elegy, introducing the other poems, was written before that. We cannot fix the date further than by saying it was most probably written between 1590 and 1595, and probably nearer the later date. I cannot think it could have been written while Spenser's loss was recent. There is nothing of the poignant, almost too little so even for an introduction. It is not sufficient to say it is a pastoral: it has infinitely less of melancholy than "Daphnaida," and Sidney was a closer friend than Arthur Gorges. As an elegy, smooth and very pleasant, it has even a hint of poetical insincerity, a turning of grief into verse, the tone one of almost perfunctory music, a preluding:

> His sports were faire, his ioyance innocent,
> Sweet without sowre, and honny without gall:
> And he himselfe seemd made for meriment,
> Merily masking both in bowre and hall.
> There was no pleasure nor delightfull play,
> When *Astrophel* so euer was away.

[4] Unanimous and obvious conjecture, says Lodowick Bryskett.

About two-thirds through the poem there is a curious statement:

> But first his sister that Clorinda hight,
> The gentlest shepheardesse that liues this day;
> And most resembling both in shape and spright
> Her brother deare, began this dolefull lay.
> Which least I marre the sweetnesse of the vearse,
> In sort as she it sung, I will rehearse.

The sixteen verses that follow were therefore written ostensibly not by Spenser but by Sidney's sister,[5] and we may credit the sincerity of this ascription, for, though Spenser's style is closely imitated, there is no capture of his tone. We have here much more the outpouring of a personal grief. Besides, though the whole is pretty and a skilful Spenserian exercise, there are lines too poor for Spenser to have written, and others not in his manner[6]:

> Ah no: it is not dead, ne can it die,
> But liues for aie, in blisfull Paradise:
> Where like a new-borne babe it soft doth lie
> In bed of lillies wrapt in tender wise.
> And compast all about with roses sweet,
> And daintie violets from head to feet.

where the prettiness is a minor prettiness.

I do not say Spenser may not occasionally have improved a verse, and I like to please myself with the notion that the following four owe something to the master of word-harmony:

[5] They used to be printed as "The Dolefull Lay of Clorinda."

[6] Two lines with un-Spenserian accents are:

> And workers of my vnremédied wo:
> and Lull him a sleep in Ángelick delight;

Breake now your gyrlonds, O ye shepheards lasses,
Sith the faire flowre, which them adornd, is gon :
The flowre, which them adornd, is gone to ashes,
Neuer againe let lasse put gyrlond on.

And yet even here there is something that is not Spenser's, as if the lines had been originally composed before he touched them.

"Colin Clouts Come Home Again" is a pastoral poem speaking chiefly of what Spenser had seen at Court in his absence from Ireland. There are inserted in it a flattery of Elizabeth, no longer written with full heart and in expression perfunctorily extravagant, and many references to actual persons covered by different poetical names, references that once had livelier interest than now. Not everything is well at Courts, the poet tells us, and he issues a warning to the shepherds in a passage that compares unfavourably, a tired piece of writing, with the magnificent outbreak against suing in "Mother Hubberd's Tale." There is a long and, I think, late-ish insertion about love, a discourse containing Spenser's central doctrine, but here not appropriate, the excuse for its present appearance being merely that love prevails at Courts as elsewhere. Spenser speaks of the virgin birth of Cupid, of the universality of love :

The Lyon chose his mate, the Turtle Doue
Her deare, the Dolphin his owne Dolphinet :

Man, too, is subject to her influence,

For beautie is the bayt which with delight
Doth man allure, for to enlarge his kynd,
Beautie the burning lamp of heauens light.

In the whole poem, moreover, there is no sufficient sustaining narrative, and if we say that structurally it is pleasantly discursive, we have exhausted judicious praise. As a whole then, though not hard to read, the poem is not highly interesting, but the passages dealing pastorally with Colin himself are at the top of Spenser's prettiness. During his absence Colin had been missed by the Irish shepherds, even by Nature:

> The running waters wept for thy returne.

Spenser explains how Colin came to travel, how Raleigh, the Shepheard of the Ocean, came to know him, and how they vied with each other in poetical exercises:

> One day (quoth he) I sat, (as was my trade)
> Vnder the foote of *Mole* that mountaine hore,
> Keeping my sheepe amongst the cooly shade,
> Of the greene alders by the *Mullaes* shore:
> There a straunge shepheard chaunst to finde me out,
> Whether allured with my pipes delight,
> Whose pleasing sound yshrilled far about,
> Or thither led by chaunce, I know not right:
> Whom when I asked from what place he came,
> And how he hight, himselfe he did ycleepe,
> The shepheard of the Ocean by name,
> And said he came far from the main-sea deepe.
> He sitting me beside in that same shade,
> Prouoked me to plaie some pleasant fit,
> And when he heard the musicke which I made,
> He found himselfe full greatly pleasd at it:
> Yet æmuling my pipe, he tooke in hond
> My pipe before that æmuled of many,
> And plaid thereon; (for well that skill he cond)
> Himselfe as skilfull in that art as any.

He pip'd, I sung; and when he sung, I piped,
By chaunge of turnes, each making other mery,
Neither enuying other, nor enuied,
So piped we, vntill we both were weary.

Spenser had his own poem on the Loves of the Rivers; Raleigh sang of usage hard received from Cynthia, the Ladie of the Sea. The poem goes on to narrate how Raleigh took Colin to England to the Court of Cynthia, and how the dweller in Ireland was surprised at England's peace:

No wayling there nor wretchdnesse is heard,
No bloodie issues nor no leprosies,
No griesly famine, nor no raging sweard,
No nightly bodrags, nor no hue and cries.

I do not know what figure this is called in Rhetoric, by which while ostensibly describing one place you are, in fact, describing another.[7]

About the time of his marriage Spenser wrote much love poetry.

Towards the close of Colin Clout, after the general remarks on love, he harks back to old stories, using again the name of Rosalind, the last thoughts of old loves before being on with the new, lines therefore, or else a strange overlapping, that can hardly have been written later than 1593. We should remember, however, that at the close of the Sixth Book of "The Faerie Queene" he is eloquent not only on Pastorella but on his Elizabeth, and something of this melee of love

[7] One finds in "Colin Clout" the original of one of Wordsworth's most famous lines,

"Is *Triton*, blowing loud his wreathed horne."

sensations may explain the amorphousness of the "Sonnet Collection." These, with the Epithalamion, were published in 1595. "Amoretti and Epithalamion *written not long since* by Edmund Spenser Printed for William Ponsonby 1595," a title gratuitously informative, perhaps because Spenser was anxious to say "here at least is no old work." Contrariwise, the critics are willing to believe that here is a bundle, freshly arranged with new additions, of flowers formerly offered in fact or fancy. It may be so. There is no need that the Sonnet Collection should have been written as a whole or in its present order, but the story is traceable and, though told disproportionately, is, as far as it goes, consecutive. His love will not listen to him, and the poet dilates on her cruelty for sixty odd sonnets. In sonnet 63 he begins to see haven, and in sonnet 68, "Most Glorious Lord of Life," there is a burst of triumph for the hoped-for reign of love. At the end the sky is clouded again.

Such being the easy structure, it is not difficult to suppose that some writing that had already done duty for Rosalind here reappears. Anyhow there is an absence of concentration. If the series of eighty-eight sonnets was written as a whole, we must believe there were too many of them for what was then to be said—too ample room, and thus the poet, having always the feeling that a thing not said at any moment could be said later, took at any moment scant pains to get it said. Be the explanation what it may, the poem as a whole, if it can be, as it must be, read as a whole, is not a success. The general effect is "idly spread."

Some of the particular sonnets have a gentle charm, like that one where he declares that his labour to win his love, and the pain he suffers from rebuffs, will make the winning sweeter:

> Sweet is the Rose, but growes vpon a brere;
> Sweet is the Iunipere, but sharpe his bough.

Some others are the work of a pressed fancy, as if Spenser were occupied with a conventional task. In others again there are phrases of his best:

> Vnquiet thought, whom at the first I bred,
> Of th' inward bale of my loue pined hart:

And occasionally there is a verse which speaks of the real, as where the poet rejoices in the prideful independence of the girl:

> Was neuer in this world ought worthy tride,
> Without some spark of such self-pleasing pride.

The fiftieth sonnet contains the original of lines better than any here:

> Can'st thou not minister to the mind's disease.[6]

In Poetical Criticism one must not draw too general conclusions, else it would be easy to deduce from this

[6] Sonnet L.:

> Long languishing in double malady,
> Of my harts wound and of my bodies griefe,
> There came to me a leach that would apply
> Fit medicines for my bodies best reliefe.
> Vayne man (quod I) that hast but little priefe
> In deep discouery of the mynds disease.

Bacon in 1605, "Advancement of Learning," Book I., has the same turn of expression: "It were too long to go over the particular remedies which learning doth minister to all the diseases of the mind; sometimes purging the ill humours," etc.

one instance that face to face with facts Spenser's imagination did not flow with its accustomed ease. If we say so we deprive ourselves of the power to appreciate the Epithalamion, a marriage hymn where out of the fullness of the fact the imagination speaketh. To all that there is of personal desire it gives matchless expression. But let us not be misled, from anxiety to avoid a merely vulgar criticism, into assigning a merit too extravagant. It is a masterpiece of art, and speaks of everything, but, just because it does, does not speak of all, and is deficient in intimacy. To the desire for a perfect union, which is by no means a desire both and by turns of the body and of the soul, but, on the contrary, an amalgam, and at that unanalysable; to this last and most intimate of all human feelings, the desire for union with one other, Shakespeare and Burns, of our poets, alone have given perfect expression. One cannot say what this feeling is, but it is not to be expressed by any catalogue, however majestic; it thinks neither of the soul nor of the body, does not, indeed, think at all; it is a feeling, perhaps only realisable when we contemplate its loss.

The truth is Spenser's art is imperfectly suited to deal with the inmost intimacies of feeling. What he has power to do is to deal with feelings that are not at all inexpressible, that, on the contrary, get themselves expressed:

> Behold whiles she before the altar stands
> Hearing the holy priest that to her speakes
> And blesseth her with his two happy hands,
> How the red roses flush vp in her cheekes,

And the pure snow with goodly vermill stayne,
Like crimsin dyde in grayne.

For if we are to understand Spenser, we must allow ourselves a violence of phrase. We must say he is not specifically a poet, he is specifically a painter. He is a hundred times the greatest poet who does not deal first and specifically with feeling, who is not interested first in his own feeling when sympathetically disturbed. In the present piece, the thing most adequately expressed, so that you do not feel anything missing, is a thing in the habit of getting itself expressed—sound :

Harke how the Minstrels gin to shrill aloud
Their merry Musick that resounds from far,
The pipe, the tabor, and the trembling Croud,
That well agree withouten breach or iar.
But most of all the Damzels doe delite,
When they their tymbrels smyte,
And thereunto doe daunce and carrol sweet,
That all the sences they doe rauish quite,
The whyles the boyes run vp and downe the street,
Crying aloud with strong confused noyce,
As if it were one voyce.
Hymen io Hymen, Hymen they do shout,
That euen to the heauens theyr shouting shrill
Doth reach, and all the firmament doth fill,
To which the people standing all about,
As in approuance doe thereto applaud
And loud aduaunce her laud,
And euermore they Hymen Hymen sing,
That al the woods them answer and theyr eccho ring.

While, therefore, the "Epithalamion" is as great an effort of Art as has ever delighted human ears, it does not discover secrets for us. Perfect as music and as a picture wholly complete, it does not bring with it interpre-

tation, and while there is an unparalleled magic of expression there is not otherwise what is properly called magic.

I do not say that the later "Prothalamion, or a Spousall Verse made in Honour of the Double Marriage of the two honorable and vertuous Ladies, the Ladie Elizabeth and the Ladie Katherine Sommerset," is a greater poem. I think, indeed, quite differently, but it has, in part, this quality of the magical. A much less ambitious effort, it does not essay to outrival Catullus, or to be the hymn of a species. It is merely an appreciation of the gentleness of grace, an appreciation which, in its opening of peace and surprise, is like the disclosure in some skyey heaven of the rest that is infinite. The picture of the particular with which it opens [9] is indeed

[9] Calme was the day, and through the trembling ayre,
Sweete breathing *Zephyrus* did softly play
A gentle spirit, that lightly did delay
Hot *Titans* beames, which then did glyster fayre:
When I whom sullein care,
Through discontent of my long fruitlesse stay
In Princes Court, and expectation vayne
Of idle hopes, which still doe fly away,
Like empty shaddowes, did afflict my brayne,
Walkt forth to ease my payne
Along the shoare of siluer streaming *Themmes*,
Whose rutty Bancke, the which his Riuer hemmes,
Was paynted all with variable flowers,
And all the meades adornd with dantie gemmes,
Fit to decke maydens bowres,
And crowne their Paramours,
Against the Brydale day, which is not long:
Sweete *Themmes* runne softly, till I end my Song.

There, in a Meadow, by the Riuers side,
A Flocke of *Nymphes* I chaunced to espy,

but a particular metaphor to fit a particular occasion, and does not pretend to speak for humanity nor of the

---

All louely Daughters of the Flood thereby,
With goodly greenish locks all loose vntyde,
As each had been a Bryde,
And each one had a little wicker basket,
Made of fine twigs entrayled curiously,
In which they gathered flowers to fill their flasket:
And with fine Fingers, cropt full feateously
The tender stalkes on hye.
Of euery sort, which in that Meadow grew,
They gathered some; the Violet pallid blew,
The little Dazie, that at euening closes,
The virgin Lillie, and the Primrose trew,
With store of vermeil Roses,
To decke their Bridegromes posies,
Against the Brydale day, which is not long:
Sweete *Themmes* runne softly, till I end my Song.

With that, I saw two Swannes of goodly hewe,
Come softly swimming downe along the Lee;
Two fairer Birds I yet did neuer see:
The snow which doth the top of *Pindus* strew,
Did neuer whiter shew,
Nor *Joue* himselfe when he a Swan would be
For loue of *Leda*, whiter did appeare:
Yet *Leda* was they say as white as he,
Yet not so white as these, nor nothing neare;
So purely white they were,
That euen the gentle streame, the which them bare,
Seem'd foule to them, and bad his billowes spare
To wet their silken feathers, least they might
Soyle their fayre plumes with water not so fayre
And marre their beauties bright,
That shone as heauens light,
Against their Brydale day, which was not long:
Sweete *Themmes* runne softly, till I end my Song.

beautiful in general; and yet this one thing seen is so seen in the essence of its beauty, human life here in one of its aspects has been so separated from the non-beautiful and corruptible, that the contemplation fills our minds with a sense of infinite peace. One cannot make the plain claim for Spenser that he lives in the infinite or among infinite ideas. So far from this, it is on beauties that are perishing, on beauties that he knows to be perishable that he casts his eye. But though each beautiful thing is transitory, Beauty itself persists. In its different manifestations Beauty speaks to us of the permanent Beauty as Life of the permanent Life, and when, therefore, we think of the perfect Beauty we contemplate the Sublime. Moreover, the two types of beauty on which Spenser loves to linger are two that have entwined with them the thought of continuing, the beauty of moving water and the beauty of women. Spenser is not specifically a religious poet, but what he enables us here to contemplate in its quiet, enduing us also with a touch of divine melancholy, sets us thinking of things beyond. He sings of water, of women, of bridal, and we hear

> the still sad music of *Eternity*.

That Spenser, however, was not specifically a religious poet we can see by turning to poems written with a purpose ostensibly more solemn, "The Foure Hymns." One does not say this directly for praise or blame, but personally, while inclined to agree with Goethe that the "direct striving after the unconditioned in this thoroughly conditioned world is a sad mistake,"

I do feel it to be a lack in Spenser that he has not more of a specifically moral and religious outlook; I mean the outlook, perhaps too predominant in Wordsworth, but, in its different way, also predominant in almost everything we have from Shakespeare. Did we want instead of Spenser another Shakespeare or Wordsworth? By no means, but something more of their power of being moved morally by moral concerns would have brought him nearer.

In the dedication of The Foure Hymns to "the right honourable and most vertuous ladies, the ladie Margaret Countess of Cumberland and the ladie Marie Countess of Warwick," Spenser explains with some quaintness the direct reference of the Collection. There were two former hymns in honour of Earthly Love and Beauty which need not now have mingled with these holy songs, but then the ladies, says the courtier, were not to be praised for heavenly beauty alone. It is difficult to say whether the reprint, or this apology for it, was the more superfluous, for unless Spenser had greatly reformed the earlier versions of his hymn in honour of Earthly Love a more innocuous poem was never written. It has nothing of free fancy. All things, Spenser tells us:

> All things by a law divine
> In one another's being mingle,

the earth, air, water, fire, and thus Love is Lord of All; but the poem never catches the attention, and we finish it without knowing what it is about.

The hymn in honour of Earthly Beauty takes higher rank. Although not written on Spenser's best level, passages and phrases catch the ear. The argument—that the beauty of women moves us so much more than the beauty of flowers, that this human beauty must in one way or another express the soul—is fully set out in the passage which begins

> Hath white and red in it such wondrous powre,
> That it can pierce through th' eyes vnto the hart;

and which comes to the conclusion

> That Beautie is not, as fond men misdeeme,
> An outward shew of things, that onely seeme.

It is true that the actual things of beauty decay and cease, and

> that same goodly hew of white and red,
> With which the cheekes are sprinckled, shal decay.
> . . . . . .
> But that faire lampe, from whose celestiall ray
> That light proceedes, which kindleth louers fire,
> Shall neuer be extinguisht nor decay,
> But when the vitall spirits doe expyre,
> Vnto her natiue planet shall retyre,
> For it is heauenly borne and can not die,
> Being a parcell of the purest skie.

Spenser then goes on to draw his general conclusion :

> For of the soule the bodie forme doth take;
> For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make.

yet immediately afterwards feels himself compelled to admit that many a gentle mind may dwell in a deformed tabernacle. To reconcile such exceptions with the rule he exercises his ingenuity. If and when it does so

occur—that a beautiful mind dwells in a deformed tabernacle—it is by chance (a reason that would explain anything), or else by some inaptness in the fleshly material (a reason that explains everything). There is still another possible objection—a person undeniably beautiful may be very bad. It is so, says Spenser, but that is because the original good intentions of the nature displaying a beautiful form have been corrupted. One sees that the general truth is whittled away by exceptions almost as general as itself. But where is the fault in this if the exceptions exist, and why is Spenser to be blamed for telling the truth? He is not to be blamed for telling the truth or even for being ingenious, but what is to be remarked is that originally he expressed his general conclusion perfectly, and that in most writers such perfection of expression would argue intensity of belief. It is impossible to imagine Wordsworth writing:

> For of the soule the bodie forme doth take;
> For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make,

and then immediately saying in the verses next succeeding: "Yes I say so, but in strict matter of fact it is really by no means so. That beautiful couplet which has just slipped from me and which indeed is truly admirable is only a phrase, an artist's phrase. It must not be taken too seriously for the contrary is nearly as true."

Doubtless language so express could never have been used by Spenser. He is unaware of the contradiction, or only intellectually aware of it. He is not troubled

by it in the least, which is to say, he has no truth to deliver but only a pleasing idea to appreciate.

Am I too lengthy with this instance? It throws light on the habit of Spenser's mind.

About the next two hymns, the solemn hymns, I must confess myself a heretic.

The first—"An Hymne of Heavenly Love"—speaks of the world having been formed by Love, by Divine Love, and of the Christian faith in a Love in correspondence with mankind. But the subject was not suited to Spenser; he was writing a religious exercise not a poem, and however sincerely he believed what he said, what he believed did not stir the poet in him. The poem may express his accepted faith, it does not express that about which he was in the habit of feeling.

"An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie" marks no advance. Its object is to speak of the beauty of everything in the world:

> And all with admirable beautie deckt,

and especially of Divine Beauty, of the Beauty of Deity, Truth, Love, Wisdom, Bliss. But, as with the earlier hymn, what is evident is the task. The long passage on the Beauty of Sapience may be taken as an example:

> There in his bosome *Sapience* doth sit,
> The soueraine dearling of the *Deity*,
> Clad like a Queene in royall robes, most fit
> For so great powre and peerelesse maiesty.
> And all with gemmes and iewels gorgeously
> Adornd, that brighter then the starres appeare,
> And make her natiue brightnes seem more cleare.

One feels there is no vision beneath this incongruous

ornament, that the painter of the picturesque is here dealing with subjects too abstract for his treatment, and that the themes of the sweet Teian poet, at which in a succeeding verse he glances enviously, were more congenial.

These hymns are of text-book interest, for they speak explicitly of Spenser's conscious ideals, but their real interest reaches much further, for if one wanted to justify the too wide statement of Mr. Yeats that Spenser "had no deep moral or religious life," one needs only to adduce them. Poets are best judged by poets. "Spenser's morality," says Mr. Yeats, "is official and impersonal," and in that short word on the restricted issue we have the end of a long matter.

The religion of Spenser is deeper in Spenser the poet than Spenser's morality, but the amount of religious thought that is parcel of his poetical mind is much less, and less definite, than his religious belief. Spenser's poetry does not move naturally among the ideas of Christian theology. In his poetical dealing with them there is indeed something official, something at once official and incongruously ornate. And yet it would be wrong to say that he was of the earth earthy, or that his nature was not open to those suggestions from which all religions spring. His horror at the great emptiness of the great emptiness of the Universe, only occasionally but then majestically expressed, betrays a deep and abiding conception of an embracing infinity. His sense, too, of the Transitory, of the Whirligig of Time, expressed throughout his life, if at first with a

kind of melancholy delight, yet with ever deepening intensity, gives recurrent voice to his feeling that in the finite there is no stay.

This is not to say that he rests in infinite ideas: it is to say that the idea of the infinite possesses him. It is not to say that his gaze is cast beyond life: it is to say that for him life without death is a meaningless abstraction. And this, however short of the attitude of the devout, is not the attitude of the materialist. The materialist puts his trust in the material; he knows, of course, that there is death:

> our whole life a journey
> Ending in certain ruin,

but his thoughts are not concerned with that, for except life and beyond life there is nothing for him. All his thoughts are therefore given to what he conceives the actual. Spenser does not conceive of life alone and by itself as actual, he sees death *in* life, and is much too serious to attempt to deal with our mortal existence as a thing permanent. He sees it as what it is, not as an unreal concrete, but as the human moment in Eternity.

This is an accurate account of Spenser's chief thoughts on religious matters. Whether or not they are to be called religious thoughts is a quarrel of definition.

In regard to Spenser's morality Mr. Yeats' sweeping statement is much nearer absolute accuracy. Spenser is an artist not a moralist. He thinks not of the ought but of the fitting, and is occupied not with the Right

but the Beautiful. He was a brave man who spoke for his friends in dark hours, for Grindal or Grey, with manly courage. He kept possession of his nerves in those bad days in Ireland, and, moreover, he had always a consciousness of virtue. He is conscious of virtue, and this expression, which I use literally, brings out, as I think, the whole truth and no more. It does not mean that he had any strenuous moral life. It means what Mr. Yeats says, that "his morality is impersonal." What he is interested in, what moves his personal enthusiasm, is the beautiful. Using words in their strict sense, this presupposes he was not a mere sensualist: from sensual excess, indeed, he turns his eyes, the riot of passion does not attract, but this not because he was a moralist, but on account of a fineness of sense. What he loves is the beauty of women, the beauty of water, the beauty of change, the beauty of sight, sound, or dream, the beauty also of holiness, of restraint, chastity, friendship, justice, courtesy or courage. These things please him, they make up his picture of the life delectable, for they are things without most of which the life-goddess would be a nerveless figure, without some of which a figure without grace. I do not think it is true to say of Spenser what Dean Church said of Raleigh, that "he was a man with a higher ideal than he attempted to follow." I do not think he nourished ideals or thought onerously. He had a sensitive heart, responsive to attention, easily bound by sympathy of view, and it came naturally to him to defend his friends and his own attitude. There

is no sign in such passages that he is discharging an unwelcome task of duty.

He painted life as he would have wished to see it, the knight and the maiden. He was an artist, but an English artist, and the pictures he loved were clear and shining ones, in which the decorous, by virtue of the triumph of the ultimately fitting, became the final supreme. It was a decorum not only of the soul but of the body, of sense as well as spirit, for who will say that both or either cannot be seemly and add to the harmony of things.

CHAPTER VI

CRITICISMS AND IMITATIONS

The peculiarity of tone in Spenser, the least imitable of great poets, always operated to confine his appeal. A chivalric poem in the days of Elizabeth was certain to find readers. Coming just after the morality plays, an allegory was bound to be understood. In a political age the thinly veiled references to Elizabeth, her Court, and policies, could not fail to attract attention. Yet even in the days of Elizabeth "The Faerie Queene" was never widely popular, and the appeal of Spenser's minor poems must always have been limited to the literate.

The atmosphere of Spenser's poetry is not that of a dream; nevertheless it is not that of the actual; so little so that a loose criticism has often attempted to define it by saying that it *is* that of a dream. Yet clearly it is not. Spenser's images are distinct: there is no haze. What is true is that we feel we are moving in a world which is not the world of actuality, much rather the world of Art. We are never tempted, as we are sometimes tempted with Shakespeare, Charlotte Brontë or Thackeray, to think of the characters as real

people, and fondly to speculate upon their actions outside the page. Spenser's poems are an arrangement of incident and emotion, just as a painting is an arrangement of line and colour. Even Milton, much as he learnt from Spenser, strikes a note more directly human. We are interested in Lucifer, in Eve, even perhaps faintly in Adam, at least after his spurt of spirit. But in Spenser we are interested in the actions of Redcross, not in Redcross himself: we are interested in the sex of Britomart: we are not at all interested in Arthur.

These are essential objections to general popularity that, however immediate Spenser's appeal to brother-poets, have operated in every age, and will continue to operate.

Three collected editions, if we may call the re-issue of 1617 a third edition, were called for at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Only one collected edition, that of 1679, appeared between those early dates and the edition of Hughes in 1715.

By this time there were new tastes in poetry. A correct age had succeeded upon the seventeenth century mixture of all styles; an age which was much under the classical tradition, the revived drama having borrowed its standards from France; an age, moreover, which, though it had its own standards of correctness, was anxious to cultivate scholarly likings, and having cultivated them, to discover justifications.

Hughes' ground, therefore, is the ground of comfortable apology. His case he felt he could make good,

but the remarks of Dryden in the beginning of his preface to his "Juvenal"[1] are external proof, where Hughes offers internal proof in plenty, of the felt necessity of making good. Dryden's censures concern alone the structure of the poem and the choice of the Spenserian stanza. At the end of the preface he episodically confesses, what will surprise any but his familiar readers, that for "beautiful turns of words and thoughts"—at "last he had recourse" to Spenser. It is in the passage in which he speaks of "that immortal poem called 'The Fairy Queen,'" and tells us that it was there that he had met "with that which he had been looking for so long in vain."

In thus speaking, Dryden, as always, represented the best poetical instinct of his day. No refined age could but be susceptible to the graces of Spenser, and yet the poem was clearly unclassical, the stanza clearly unplain. Allegory was an amusing diversion, but surely unsubstantial. "There is another sort of imaginary beings," says Addison, writing in 1712 of the pleasures of imagination, "that we sometimes meet with among the poets, when the author represents any passion, appetite, virtue or vice, under a visible shape, and makes it a person or actor in his poem. Of this nature are the descriptions of Hunger and Envy in Ovid, of Fame in Virgil, and of Sin and Death in Milton. We find a whole creation of the like shadowy persons in Spenser, who had an admirable talent in representations of this kind."

[1] 1693, "Essay on Satire."

This patronising essayist was the same who had just devoted many numbers of the "Spectator" to "Paradise Lost," and who in the same year was appealed to publicly and in vain by Steele, in a letter supplied perhaps by Hughes, "to attempt the encomium of Spenser also."[2]

The editorial matter prefixed to Hughes's edition is perfunctory. There is a short life, a short discourse on allegory, a short essay on "The Faerie Queene," another, shorter, on the minor poems, and a glossary which assumes, and probably justly, that the commonest Elizabethan words needed to be explained.

But short as Hughes's critical pieces are, they betray a good general understanding of his author. He was a good enough critic to feel the charm of Fairfax's Tasso; especially to admire the speech of Spenser's Despair;[3] to speak of Spenser's painter-like genius; to distinguish him from Chaucer in a sentence, "*Chaucer* excelled in his Characters; *Spenser* in his Descriptions," and to find in the picture of Pastorella dancing among the Graces "all the Skill of the Painter assisted by the Passion of the Lover." In his careful distinctions on allegory he distinguishes between a parallel such as we find in the "Aeneid," and the introduction into a poem of persons properly allegorical, such persons as Error,

[2] *Spectator*, Nov. 19, 1712. But perhaps Addison was by this time aware of his friend's intended edition of 1715, and understood the request but as the puff preliminary.

[3] It was the description of "Despair" that, according to the story, especially took captive Sidney's fancy.

Mammon or Care; he justly observes that Tasso's subsequent allegorising of his poem leaves the poem independent of the allegory in a way Spenser's certainly is not: he proclaims that an allegory should be lively, a rule of Addison's; and he asserts, in contradistinction to Temple, that the moral meaning should be clear. "A moral which is not clear is in my apprehension next to no moral at all." Further, he defends allegory by a reference to the Bible and the East, and, in the manner of his time, by further references to Addison's Vision of Mirza, even to the jejune allegory of the sexes in the second volume of the "Guardian."

Spenser's general plan he does not attempt to defend by the rules of Art, and on this topic he is as reasonable as ourselves: "It may seem strange indeed, since Spenser appears to have been well acquainted with the best writers of Antiquity, that he has not imitated them in the Structure of his Story. Two Reasons may be given for this: the first is, that at the time when he wrote, the *Italian* poets, whom he has chiefly imitated, and who were the first Revivers of this Art among the Moderns, were in the highest vogue, and were universally read and admir'd. But the chief Reason was probably, that he chose to frame his Fable after a Model which might give the greatest Scope to that Range of Fancy which was so remarkably his Talent. There is a Bent in Nature, which is apt to determine Men that particular way in which they are most capable of excelling; and though it is certain he might have form'd a better Plan, it is

to be question'd whether he cou'd have executed any other so well."[4]

On the topic of Spenser's allegory he has one admirable critical remark that has been forgotten by many critics since 1715:

"The perpetual Stories of Knights, Giants, Castles, and Enchantments, and all that Train of Legendary Adventures, wou'd indeed appear very trifling, if *Spenser* had not found a way to turn them all into Allegory, or if a less masterly Hand had fill'd up his Draught. But it is surprising to observe how much the Strength of the Painting is superior to the Design."

Thomas Warton in 1754, in his "Observations on The Fairy Queen of Spenser," develops Hughes's general and reasonable thesis while adding the particular learning in which Hughes was less proficient.

It was clear Spenser's poem was not founded on the Classical model. Let us admit that at once. Spenser followed the prevailing taste, and Ariosto was his model rather than Tasso, "at least in conduct and decorum." Spenser was "naturally biassed to prefer that plan which would admit the most extensive range for his unlimited imagination."

Hughes had stated without comment what is true, that "the first book was an entire work of itself."

[4] A quotation which recalls what he says on Rules in his essay on Allegory:

"What *Sir William Temple* observes about Rules in general, may perhaps be more particularly applicable to this; that *they may possibly hinder some from being very bad Poets, but are not capable of making any very good one.*"

Warton, rather unfairly, assumes that he meant this as unreservedly to the constructor's credit, and thereupon takes occasion to remark that it is idle to praise an accidental merit or demerit of this kind. The separate parts of a whole should not be complete wholes, but parts of a whole; and the true general moral from his argument is, as he says, that it is "absurd to think of judging either Ariosto or Spenser by precepts which they did not attend to."

Warton then proceeds to illustrate from all the resources of his then unique learning how much Spenser was indebted to the old romances. Florimell's girdle comes from the "Boy and the Mantle," "The Well of Life" from "Sir Bevis of Southampton." Similarly, in pursuance of his "chief aim to give a clear and comprehensive estimate of the characteristical merits and manner, of this admired, but neglected poet," he has long chapters to illustrate Spenser's indebtedness to ancient history and mythology, to Chaucer and to Ariosto. "The Tale of the Squire of Dames" is a copy of "The Host's Tale" in the twenty-eighth canto of the Orlando. Spenser's Radegund comes from Ariosto's land of Amazons, and the Blatant Beast is with a difference, the Questing Beast of the "Morte D'Arthur." He speaks also of Spenser's inaccuracies, of his allegory, and of his imitations of himself.

On the stanza, versification, and language he is critically interesting. The stanza, calling for the repetition of one rhyme four times, and of another, thrice, explains often Spenser's mis-handling and mis-spelling

of words, his occasionally unnecessary detail in offensive subjects when introduced, for the stanza supplied always a temptation to dilatation.

"It obliged him to dilate the thing to be expressed, however unimportant, with trifling and tedious circumlocutions, viz. :

> Now hath fair Phoebe, with her silver face
> Thrice seen the shadows of this nether world,
> Sith last I left that honourable place,
> In which her royal presence is enroll'd.—2, 2, 44.

That is, 'It is three months since I left her palace.'" On the other hand, it was often useful. "Dryden, I think, somewhere remarks, that rhyme often helped him to a thought; an observation which, probably, Spenser's experience had likewise supplied him with."

The detailed value of Warton's learned though very desultory treatise is that it supplied the Notes to subsequent editions, and was the initiation of illustration.

The object of Hurd's "Letters on Chivalry and Romance" (1762) was more general. Broadly, it was to determine the superiority of the Romantic or Gothic fables to the classic as subjects for poetry. Specifically, it was to demand that "The Faerie Queene" should be judged by romantic not classic standards.

The treatise opens with the statement that "The ages, we call barbarous, present us with many a subject of curious speculation. What, for instance, is more remarkable than the *Gothic* Chivalry? or than the spirit of Romance, which took its rise from that singular institution?" Then having told us that Ariosto, Tasso,

Spenser, and Milton were seduced by those so-called barbarities—he asks, "Was this caprice and absurdity in them? Or, may there not be something in the *Gothic* Romance peculiarly suited to the views of a genius, and to the ends of poetry? And may not the philosophic moderns have gone too far, in their perpetual ridicule and contempt of it?"

He then goes on to proclaim the institution of Chivalry as "the natural and even sober effect of the feudal policy." The petty courts of the several Barons would add the manners of Courtesy to those of War. It was thought that Chivalry took its origin from the Crusades. Hurd thinks it would be more true to say that the Crusades arose from Chivalry, though doubtless the Crusades would tend to reinforce the prevailing Chivalric notions.

His next step is to draw a parallel between the heroic age in Greece and the feudal age in Europe. "The political state of *Greece,* in the earlier periods of its story, was similar in many respects to that of *Europe,* as broken by the feudal system into an infinite number of petty independent governments," and this parallel, in his fourth letter, he supports with instances. He opens Letter V. with the statement that "the purpose of the casual hints, suggested in my last letter, was only to show that the resemblance between the heroic and *Gothic* ages is great: so great that the observation of it did not escape the old Romancers themselves, with whom, as an ingenious critic[5] observes, the siege of

[5] Warton.

Thebes and the Trojan War were favourite stories." In point of fact, however, the Heroic and Gothic Ages were not alike in every respect. In the Gothic Ages women were more esteemed. He suggests as a reason that in the Gothic Ages a woman might be the heir of a fief, and thus become the more attractive object of courtship. And if it is objected that feudal gallantry had come into existence before women could succeed to fiefs, at least the writing of the romances was subsequent to this privilege. So that the exaggerated courtesy of the romances may reasonably be credited to this custom.

On a review of what he has already said, Hurd concludes that "so far as the heroic and *Gothic* manners are the same, the pictures of each, if well taken, must be equally entertaining. But I go further, and maintain that the circumstances, in which they differ, are clearly to the advantage of the *Gothic* designers," for two reasons, on account of "the improved gallantry of the times; and the superior solemnity of their superstitions."

As the world grew older it added to what remained of the pagan superstition "those supplies, which ignorance and corrupted religion have poured in upon it." Superstitions and fancies are of use to Epic poets, and the Gothic superstitions were even more sublime, more terrible, more alarming than the Greek. "In a word you will find that the *manners* the poets paint and the *superstitions* they adopt, are the more poetical for being *Gothic*."

Hurd now descends upon his particular subject. "Under this idea then of a Gothic not classical poem the Faery Queen is to be read and criticised. And on these principles it would not be difficult to unfold its merit in another way than has been hitherto attempted." For example, in regard to its general plan, "Judge of the Faery Queen by the classic models, and you are shocked with its disorder: consider it with an eye to its *Gothic* original, and you find it regular."

"If you ask then, what is this *Unity* of Spenser's Poem? I say, it consists in the relation of its several adventures to one common *original,* the appointment of the Faery Queen; and to one common end, the completion of the Faery Queen's injunctions." "In other words, it is a unity of *design,* and not of action." It is true that Spenser, unfortunately and mistakenly, in deference to classical taste, attempted to introduce a classic Unity of Action by making Arthur participant in each adventure, and therefore the whole story the story of him. "But from the union of the two designs there arises a perplexity and confusion, which is the proper, and only considerable, defect of this extraordinary poem." As to the reason why the Gothic fables had fallen of late into such disrepute, this was due to the prevalence of the French taste and to their jealousy of the Italians—Ariosto and Tasso.

He speaks next of the wonders of Romance, and asks if, after all, they are so very unreasonable. Rationalising in the true eighteenth century manner, he suggests that some had their origin in facts. For instance, the

"Wall of Fire" was merely a poetical way of speaking "of the flames of Feugregeois, as it was called, that is of wildfire, which appeared so strange on its first invention and application in the barbarous ages." The women warriors may be supported by the instance of Robert the Norman's wife, who "fought side by side with her husband in his battles," [6] not to mention other instances from the Crusades.

The giants were really oppressive feudal lords,[7] and the feasts, where it was usual for knights to appear before the prince and claim the privilege of being sent on any adventure to which the solemnity might give occasion, had equally their foundation in actual practice. "This was the real practice in the days of pure and ancient chivalry. And an image of this practice was afterwards kept up in the castles of the great, on any extraordinary festival or solemnity: of which if you want an instance, I refer you to the description of a feast made at *Lisle* in 1453, in the Court of Philip the Good, Duke of *Burgundy*, for a crusade against the *Turks*."

Moreover, some stories not now believable, stories perhaps of Monsters, Dragons, Serpents, were received in those days for sufficiently natural reasons—on account of the vulgar belief in enchantments, or on

[6] See Tasso, G. L., Book xx.

[7] In support of this, that the Giants were really oppressive feudal lords, Hurd actually instances Spenser, Book V., c. 2, Pollente's Bridge; in fact, an invention by Spenser, justificatory of severity, no doubt partly taken from the romances, but meant to have main reference to the savagery of the Irish Wars.

account of Eastern tradition heard during the Crusades, or from the strange things told and believed on the discovery of the New World.[8]

The poetic employment of these wonders is therefore to be defended on grounds not wholly unreasonable, and in so far as it is not so defensible, is it necessary in poetry that everything should be strictly credible. "The poets," he says, and here surely he is a critic beyond his age, "think it enough if they can but bring you to *imagine* the possibility of them." "Men of cold fancies and philosophical dispositions," says Addison in the four hundred and nineteenth *Spectator,* "object to this kind of poetry (what Dryden called the Faery way of writing) that it has not probability enough to affect the imagination. But—many are prepossest with such false opinions, as dispose them to *believe* these particular delusions: at least, we have all *heard* so many pleasing relations in favour of them, that we do not care for seeing through the *falshood,* and willingly give ourselves up to so agreeable an imposture." Further, in support of poetic truth, Hurd continues—"to speak in the Philosophic language of Mr. Hobbes, it is something much *beyond the actual bounds, and only within the conceived possibility of nature.*"

It should be observed that this liberty, as of course, concerns alone matter that is matter of imagination. Where one would affect the reader through the passions, "the liberty of transgressing nature is infinitely

[8] Cf. Spenser, Preface to the Second Book of "The Faerie Queene."

restrained." . . . "We must first believe before we can be affected." . . . "But the case is different with the more sublime and creative poetry. This species, addressing itself solely or principally to the Imagination; a young and credulous faculty, which loves to admire and to be deceived, has no need to observe those cautious rules of credibility so necessary to be followed by him, who would touch the affections and interest the heart." Spenser's licence of invention is therefore not improper. This is not to say it would pass on the stage where more vrai-semblance is necessary, nor in more advanced ages, for "writers do not succeed so well in painting what they have heard, as what they believe, themselves, or at least observe in others a facility of believing." . . . "But this is nothing to the case in hand where we are considering the merit of epic poems written under other circumstances." In vulgar beliefs one must conform to the tone of one's age; thus Milton properly substituted Angels and Devils for the Fays of Spenser.

In conclusion, as an objection to his argument, Hurd admits that it may be urged that "the classical manners are still admir'd and imitated by the poets, when the Gothic have long since fallen into disuse." Nor can one deny the fact so stated. The Feudal manners *were* peculiar, and, when Feudalism ceased, became, as the years passed, more and more of a forgotten memory. Homer's manners, though different from ours, may be found still, or something like them, wherever primitive conditions obtain. Yet one is not on this account to

infer that one is obliged "to give up the Gothic manners as visionary and fantastic." By our neglect of them we have lost "a world of fine fabling," and "the Faery Queen, one of the noblest productions of modern poetry, is fallen into so general a neglect, that all the zeal of its commentators is esteemed officious and impertinent." But let earth-born critics say what they will, Hurd still clings to his favourite poet, and is happy in believing with the ancient "that they, who deceive, are honester than they who do not deceive; and they, who are deceived, wiser than they who are not deceived."

This was all written before 1762, and the judicious reader will conclude that by that date critical opinion was prepared for a reasonable approach to Spenser. In 1765 appeared Percy's "Reliques," and from that year we may date the beginnings of the Romantic Revival, a movement that, effecting many things, brought the author of "The Faerie Queene" into his kingdom. Southey, as a Westminster schoolboy, (1788-1792), among his many ingenious projects contemplated completing that poem. 1798 was the year of the "Lyrical Ballads," and a little later Wordsworth is writing of

> Sweet Spenser moving through his clouded heaven
> With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,

a tribute to the deeper side of Spenser's genius, which awaited only the further tribute to the lighter side in the dedication of "The White Doe of Rylstone":

> Notes could we hear as of a faery shell.

Meanwhile there had been appearing at intervals what in the sum was a considerable number of poems imitative of Spenser or his stanza, in themselves, as Mr. Hudson says, "a sign of awakening interest in Spenser and his work." [9]

In this body of writing two different streams can be distinguished; one a stream of parody or burlesque, the other, one of serious imitation. Both start about the same time, though the burlesque thins away the sooner. In some cases the same author, in one case one may almost say the same poem, figures in both classes. In 1748 there appeared in Dodsley's collection, to remain in the English Anthology, a domestic masterpiece—"The Schoolmistress" of Shenstone. There hangs about it a suspicion of sweet drollery. One knows not quite if the poet does not mean to be wholly serious, despite his benign smile upon occasion. There are thirty-five stanzas in this tale of urchins, the twenty-eighth containing the original of Gray's "Mute inglorious Milton." It is the happiest play with Spenser, Spenser in the nursery, at once touching, pleasing, quaint; it is also the happiest play with human life; the sense of the congeries, the isolation of private trouble and the bustle of the multitude being all given to a nicety. The old Schoolmistress herself, mimic law in decent garb, is as English as "A Country Justice":

> A russet stole was o'er her shoulders thrown,
> A russet kirtle fenc'd the nipping air;

[9] "Introduction to the Study of Literature," W. H. Hudson.

'Twas simple russet, but it was her own;
'Twas her own country bred the flock so fair;
'Twas her own labour did the fleece prepare;
And, sooth to say, her pupils, rang'd around,
Through pious awe did term it passing rare,
For they in gaping wonderment abound,
And think, no doubt, she been the greatest wight on ground.

But perfect as the plaything is, one has to confess reluctantly that it took its origin in the broadly mock-heroic. The whole sprung from some twelve stanzas printed privately by Shenstone in his youth,[10] and devoted to the diminutive incident alone, the correction of an urchin by his Dame. The employment of Spenser's stanza for this purpose, a stanza consecrated to the overthrow of Orgoglio, or the chaining of Amoret by Busyrane, was an exercise in the sharpest antithesis. All the verses and alterations that make out of a mere parody a poem of Shenstone's own were added in 1742 or 1748. By the later date Shenstone had written not only many of those songs and Levities, in some of which he anticipates the playfulness of Cowper, but also the ballad of "Jemmy Dawson." He was therefore fully alive to the gentle pathos and soft charm that gave the poet of Chivalry so strong a claim on domestic affection. By this time also, most, if not all, of the Elegies were written, among which is that one on the fate of Jessy, where a genuine truth of feeling mingles with the strange *gentleman's morality* of the age; and another, lamenting how soon the pleasing novelty of

[10] In 1737, when he was twenty-three.

life is o'er, obviously by the author of "The Schoolmistress":

> Ah me! my Friend! it will not, will not last!
> This fairy scene that cheats our youthful eyes;
> The charm dissolves; the aërial music's past;
> The banquet ceases and the vision flies.
>
> Where are the splendid forms, the rich perfumes,
> Where the gay tapers, where the spacious dome?
> Vanish'd the costly pearls, the crimson plumes,
> And we, delightless, left to wander home.
>
> Vain now are books, the sage's wisdom vain!
> What has the world to bribe our steps astray?
> Ere Reason learns by studied laws to reign,
> The weakened passions, self-subdued obey.

And again:

> Oft too I pray'd, 'twas Nature form'd the pray'r,
> To grace my native scenes, my rural home;
> To see my trees express their planter's care,
> And gay, on Attic models, raise my dome.
>
> But now 'tis o'er, the dear delusions o'er!
> A stagnant breezeless air becalms my soul;
> A fond aspiring candidate no more,
> I scorn the palm before I reach the goal.
> . . . . . .
> Tedious again to curse the drizzling day!
> Again to trace the wintry tracts of snow!
> Or, sooth'd by vernal airs, again survey
> The self-same hawthorns bud, and cowslips blow!

Taedium vitae! Something of this explains the bending urbanity of his finished picture of the Cottage School.

That it should have owed its origin to parody is not altogether surprising. Pope, the setter of many new fashions, had early popularised the habit of parodying Spenser in some imitations of "English Poets," pub-

lished in 1727, but really written some dozen years before. Nor was the young Shenstone the only one to be tempted by this "example bad" of the poet of precocity, and the same year that saw the private appearance of the first burlesque version of "The Schoolmistress" was also that of the anonymous publication of Akenside's rather heavy trifle, "The Virtuoso":

> He many a creature did anatomise,
> Almost unpeopling water, air, and land;
> Beasts, fishes, birds, snails, caterpillars, flies,
> Were laid full low by his relentless hand,
> That oft with gory crimson was distain'd;
> He many a dog destroy'd, and many a cat;
> Of fleas his bed, of frogs the marshes drain'd,
> Could tellen if a mite were lean or fat,
> And read a lecture o'er the entrails of a gnat.

It became, in short, a sort of literary game to use the stanza of the grave Spenser for circumstances ludicrous or minute. And so we come to notice Richard Owen Cambridge, an elegant amateur of letters, the author of "The Scribleriad," a series of poems of mid-century date, in which he exercised a talent for the parody of classical styles. Ten years earlier he had married Miss Trenchard, and it pleased him to feign that he had been a wizard and abducted her by water. This trifle—"Archimage"—of twenty-nine Spenserian stanzas, written probably in the early forties, has its scene at his seat at Whitminster. Of story there is none. As Miss Trenchard was walking by the river, Archimage carried her off in his private boat, manned by his man-

servant, a fisherman, a shoemaker and a blacksmith. These simple personages are depicted in the manner of Ignaro. We have, therefore, not much more than a mere parody, though, it must be admitted, a skilful one. It is a merely technical imitation, of course, the form alone being copied, and there being no attempt to catch the feeling of Spenser.

Happier exercises were composed by Moses Mendez, a man of means and Jewish extraction, who contributed to Dodsley's fourth volume of the Mid-Century, and was largely responsible for a collection of Poems[1] by recent writers that appeared in 1768 as a sort of supplement. Mendez, whom Southey considered worthy of mention in his "Specimens of the Later English Poets," had died in 1758, and has a niche in literary history, but his poem "The Squire of Dames," to be found in Dodsley, is, as one might judge from the title, altogether a burlesque of Spenser sage and grave. There is neither the serious tone of Spenser nor the casually looser tone of his satirical humour. The liberties of Mendez, such as they are, are those of a polite age, and the verse he employs, sweet and smoothly flowing, is more akin to Spenser's serious verses than to those Spenser wrote when *he* spoke for the Squire of Dames. Yet the imitation of Spenser's gentler style is, at times, extremely happy.

In a slightly earlier poem, "The Seasons," published in 1751, and to be found in Pearch, one distinguishes

[1] Known as "Pearch." A Collection of Poems by Several Hands. Published by G. Pearch, 4 vols., 1768-1770.

the same metrical excellence. There is just a suggestion of burlesque, no more; homely things must be brought in:

> She them discourses not of fashions nice,
> Nor of the trilling notes that eunuchs sing;
> Allurements vain, that prompt the soul to vice!
> Ne tells she them of Kesar or of King:
> Too great the subject for so mean a ring.
> Her lessons teach to swell the capon's size;
> To make the hen a numerous offspring bring;
> Or how the way-ward mother to chastise,
> When from her vetchy nest the weetless vagrant hies.

It is no more than a suspicion, however,—the expiring tradition of mock-heroic.

Altogether, these mock imitations—Akenside, Cambridge, Mendez—go some way to justify Johnson's impatience. He is speaking in the one hundred and twenty-first *Rambler* of the imitation of Spenser, "which, by the influence of some men of learning and genius, seems likely to gain upon the age, and therefore deserves to be more attentively considered," and he goes on "To imitate the fictions and sentiments of Spenser can incur no reproach, for allegory is perhaps one of the most pleasing vehicles of instruction. But I am very far from extending the same respect to his diction and stanza." And elsewhere in his life of West he complains that, "An imitation of Spenser is nothing to a reader, however acute, by whom Spenser has never been perused." We must agree, I think, in so far as the imitation is jocular or merely formal and expresses nothing of the writer's self, in this unlike "The School-

mistress" of Shenstone or "The Nativity" of William Thompson.

Among the serious eighteenth century imitators the Rev. William Thompson occupies a curious position. He is early in point of time, "The Nativity" being written in 1736, though not printed till twenty-two years later, but to him the imitation was of service in educing individuality. That he had a faculty for admiration is shown by his twenty admiring tributes to previous practisers in verse ranging from Philips to Chaucer. But his original talent was slight, and helped constantly by study—Milton, Spenser or Gay. When he is most original he is religious, and his poem "The New Lyre," when docked of its last verse, might reasonably be included in our Anthologies. His longest poem, "Sickness," written in fluent blank verse and decorated with some Miltonic dignities suffers from its theme. "No common skill," said Davenport,[2] one of his first and last editors, "was required to prevent such a subject exciting disgust." The praise, if temperate, is discriminating. Thompson's poem does not excite disgust, but neither does it excite delight. Armstrong, in his "Art of Preserving Health," wrote a verse intolerable to the coarsest ear—tumid to tumidity, but his performance had at anyrate the interest of sound sense. Everyone who enjoys conversing with his doctor enjoys the lucubrations of Armstrong. Thompson's poem has neither this merit nor any compensating advantage. One rises uninstructed, with no clearer

[2] In 1822.

knowledge of things medical or poetical than before one sat down. The "Hymn in Sickness" at the close:

> Though straining coughs this mortal frame
> To dissolution bring,

with its unintentionally absurd parody of the hymnal manner, argues a writer without humour, the same writer that in the Epitaph on his mother, who had been twice married, could thus make unpoetical use of that fact:

> A mother sweetly tender, justly dear,
> Oh! never to be named without a tear:
> A wife of every social charm possess'd,
> Blessing her husbands,—In her husbands bless'd.

Yet under the influence of Gay, to the tune of "Black-eyed Susan," his poem "The Milkmaid" has even a quizzical charm. By all the laws of prognostication, so influenceable a writer should have produced, when imitating, a close imitation. But this, though sometimes found, is not what is to be remarked, rather that Spenser's influence brings out what is original. There was some affinity both in sweetness and seriousness of disposition, and once set to Spenser's tune, Thompson speaks for himself. The "Hymn to May," though avowedly an imitation and using a variant of Spenser's stanza in his "Hymns," is not very Spenserian. One is never under the impression one is reading Spenser, though constantly and obviously Spenser's pupil. On occasion there is an odd intrusion of eighteenth century urbanity:

> Now up the chalky mazes of yon hill,
> With grateful diligence, we wind our way:

What opening scenes our ravish'd senses fill,
And wide, their rural luxury display!
Woods, dales, and flocks, and herds, and cots, and spires,
Villas of learned clerks, and gentle 'squires;[3]
The villa of a friend the eye-sight never tires.

"The Epithalamium," written in the stanza of "The Faerie Queene," a tribute to the marriage of Frederick and Augusta, is much more of a literal imitation, and yet what is generally caught is rather the temper than the tone of Spenser. Occasionally the poet condescends rather to copy than to imitate:

The wanton Naiads, Doris' daughters all,
Range in a ring: Pherusa blooming fair,
Cymodoce dove-ey'd, with Florimal,
Sweet-smelling flowrets deck'd their long green hair,
And Erato, to Love, to Venus dear;
Galene dress'd in smiles and lily-white,
And Phao with her snowy bosom bare,
All these, and more than these, a dainty sight!
In dance and merriment and sweet belgards delight.

Such criticisms cannot be passed on "The Nativity." It is at once the closest in imitation and the most original both in conception and in tone.

The Nativity scene here presented is not the biblical scene of the Nativity, but rather what to the poet was the ideal reality behind the mortal show. The King of Heaven, to the poet dreaming by Isis fields, was born in a heavenly palace, with Faith, Hope, and Charity attendant, the entering Virtues offering gifts:

[3] The apostrophe means that the word is Esquires—urban enough!

A rich pavilion rear'd within its height,
The capitals and friezes gold entire,
Glistening with carbuncles; a various light
Wav'd tremulous, and set the eye on fire.
A silken curtain, drawn on silver wire,
And ting'd with colours of the summer sky
Flow'd round, and bade the ruder gales retire.
Four forms attendant at the portals lie,
The same Ezekiel saw with keen prophetic eye.

Unlike, O much unlike the strawy shed,
Where Mary, Queen of Heaven, in humbless lay,
Where erst the Infant-God repos'd his head,
And deigned to dwell in tenement of clay:
The clouded tabernacle of the day!
The shepherd's dream was mystical I ween,
Isaiah on his bosom pour'd a ray
And painted to his eyes the gentle scene
Where lions dandled lambs; O Peace, thy golden reign! [4]

The picture of Charity, though typical, is from Thompson's own imagination:

Then Charity full-zoned, as her beseems,
Her breasts were softer ivory, her hair
Play'd with the sunny rays in amber streams,
And floated wanton on the buxom air; [5]

[4] In these two stanzas the phraseology as well as the tone of Giles Fletcher will be remarked—("Christ's Victorie and Triumph," Book I., stanza 79, "infant Lord," and stanza 82, "strawy tent"). Indeed, Thompson's tone, in so far as it is not peculiar to himself, is much more the tone of Giles Fletcher than of Spenser. In estimating his originality one should remember this. He imitates Spenser but recollects Giles Fletcher.

[5] It is the turn of expression, not the thought, that is new.

There shalt thou see the scarf of Cupid's mother,
Snatched from the soft moist ivory of her arm,
To wrap about Adonis' wounded thigh.

"Old Fortunatus," Act II., Sc. 1.

This fantasy, without disfigurement further than the concluding stanza, which bathetically celebrates "the tuneful Twick'nam swain" on account of his "Messiah," a verse that could easily be omitted, has been altogether forgotten. I suppose, in dealing with such a subject taste is changed, and fancy is felt to be inappropriate; yet it is difficult to see why the door of republication should be closed on a poet as religious as the author of "The Hound of Heaven," and more securely protestant.

If we are looking for imitation pure and simple, mimicry as near perfection as possible, we shall find it in Gilbert West. West was intended for the Church, but, according to Johnson "was seduced to a more airy mode of life, by a commission in a troop of horse, procured him by his uncle." Returning to civil occupations, he became the author of the accepted version of Pindar, and some religious writing in prose, in the eighteenth century much esteemed. In 1739 he published by itself "On the Abuse of Travelling, A Canto, In Imitation of Spenser." In this canto there are fifty-eight stanzas:

> Archimage tempts the Red-Cross Knight
> From love of Fairy-land,
> With show of foreign pleasures all,
> The which he doth withstand.

It is written in mockery of what West considered an anti-insular and anti-national habit, that of running curiously after European things. Spenser himself in his "Mother Hubberd's Tale" had spoken with scorn

Of forreine beasts, not in the forest bred,

and the interest of the poem is purely in the imitation. The mimicry is of Spenser's form alone. Of his feeling, which is much more nearly caught by Shenstone or William Thompson, there is no proper trace; still, within its limit the mimicry is exact. Sometimes, in the first forty-five stanzas, one does seem to be actually reading Spenser. A suggestion of burlesque there is, but very delicately insinuated, a suspicion of mock gravity in the gravity of the tone, as if one had a right to smile behind one's hand at Chivalry and recurrent rhymes. Nor is there too much story for the length of the imitation, an uncommon merit with the imitators, who seldom think of imitating tediousness. West has the true amble and prolixity of Spenser's narrative—the style diffuse.[6]

In 1751 he produced another imitation by no means so successful, for in the interval he had become serious and religious, and, while pleasing himself by returning to his metrical amusement, he has now, in his canto on Education, a definite and practical message of his own. This is a serious poem, expressing what the sober West believed:

> The Knight, as to Paedia's home
> He his young son conveys,
> Is staid by Custom; with him fights,
> And his vain pride displays.

[6] The only fault is that towards the end the Allegory is a little trifling—the lady *Vertu* and the rest—and that, as with all the imitators, such little amorosity as there is has not Spenser's delicacy.

Custom presides over the Rod and classical learning:

> And well their outward vesture did express
> The bent and habit of their inward mind,
> Affecting wisdom's antiquated dress,
> And usages by time cast far behind.
> Thence, to the charms of younger science blind,
> The customs, laws, the learning, arts, and phrase
> Of their own countries, they with scorn declin'd;
> Ne sacred truth herself would they embrace,
> Unwarranted, unknown in their fore-fathers' days.

Finally the knight rescues his young son from Custom, whom he engages and defeats but cannot kill, and, journeying on, meets the lady Discipline or Albion, who discourses to him on the evils of the times, evils to be mended by the Good. In this poem, too, there are occasional stanzas imitatively happy, but, in the main, West is too occupied with his educational opinions to imitate the manner or even, with his old facility, the metre of Spenser. The trend of the educational outlook suggests a forward moving thought to Cowper's "Tirocinium," which appeared thirty-three years later; the construction of the fable, a backward one to James Thomson's "Castle of Indolence," published three years before. Even "The Seasons" are in West's memory.

> With prudent culture the young shoots to rear.

Not once nor twice, moreover, West is open to Johnson's cavil in *The Rambler*:

"The imitators of Spenser are indeed not very rigid censors of themselves, for they seem to conclude that, when they have disfigured their lines with a few obsolete

syllables, they have accomplished their design, without considering that they ought not only to admit old words, but to avoid new." This West forgets when he speaks of a valley:

> Across whose *uniform* flat bosom glide
> Ten thousand streams,

or when he mentions:

> Religions sacred rays,
> Whose *soul-invigorating* influence
> Shall purge their minds.

In 1748[7] appeared James Thomson's "Castle of Indolence." It had been written before this year, but

---

[7] In this year also there was published "Psyche or the Great Metamorphosis," a poem written by Gloucester Ridley, in Singer's phrase "the amiable and very learned Gloucester Ridley," a poet-priest once famous for his sermons. As an imitation of Spenser's metre, though in places not unlike, it is not as good as West's. The poem is a curious mingling of the Cupid and Psyche legend and borrowings from the "Garden of Adonis" and "The Romance of the Rose," with additions from elsewhere. Spenser's feeling is not in it, but it is serious, not burlesque. Occasionally in the interests of his own narrative Ridley falls into quite an unimitative tone, and there is a stanza which oddly combines a reminiscence of Dryden's verses on Purcell with Spenserian imitation:

> The temper'd clime full many a tree affords;
> Those many trees blush forth with ripen'd fruite;
> The blushing fruite to feast invites the birds;
> The birds with plenteous feasts their strength recruite;
> And warble songs more sweet than shepherd's flute.
> The gentle stream that roll'd the stones among,
> Charm'd with the place, almost forgot its suite;
> But list'ning and responding to the song,
> Loit'ring, and winding often, murmured elong.

With which cp. Dryden's verses "On the Death of Mr. Purcell,"

the exact date of its earlier composition is indeterminate. As an imitation the two cantos come behind West's "Abuse of Travelling"; as a reminiscence the first canto is much ahead of him. Like Shenstone and William Thompson, the poet of "The Seasons" has caught something of Spenser's sweetness. In the first canto he comes nearer than either to Spenser's grace. Moreover, in the first canto he produces a poem which is eminently his own, and, much more than "The Seasons," expressive of his inner feeling.

Thomson, a cultivated and indolent man, produces here a poetry that so far was novel in English, the poetry of ease enjoyed and elegant rest. One hardly cares to consider work so original from the standpoint of Spenserian imitation. To say it has not Spenser's tone is, in this case, a compliment—it is to say it has Thomson's. Here, in the early stanzas of the first canto, was a new gift to the world, "inviting sleep and soft forgetfulness":

> Join'd to the prattle of the purling rills,
> Were heard the lowing herds along the vale,
> And flocks loud-bleating from the distant hills,
> And vacant shepherds piping in the dale:

But that is not Spenser—a pastorality of a different character: so far from speaking from Spenser's level,

---

where he is speaking of the lark and linnet being abashed to silence by the nightingale:

> They cease their mutual spite,
> Drink in her music with delight,

And, listening and silent, silent and listening, listening and silent obey.

it speaks from Thomson's, and expresses perfectly what was dear to his gentle spirit. Indeed, all Thomson is here; Thomson in his easy seat, who expresses in the sixth stanza his highest commendation:

> A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was,

the Thomson of the Picturesque, who before Collins wrote the "Ode on the Superstitions of the Highlands," loved to contemplate from his own fireside of comfort the romance of Hebridean wastes; the Thomson who at the end of "The Seasons" had breathed out his pantheistic hymn, and to whom the noises of animate nature were so intolerable:

> No cocks, with me, to rustic labour call,
> From village on to village sounding clear;
> To tardy swain no shrill-voic'd matron's squall:
> No dogs, no babes, no wives, to stun your ear;
> No hammers thump; no horrid blacksmith sear,
> No noisy tradesman your sweet slumbers start,
> With sounds that are a misery to hear.

The second canto, a great falling off, is interesting merely as exemplifying the social cares of the eighteenth century. "The Castle of Indolence," Thomson taking a welcome hint from Sir Guyon's Bower of Bliss, is finally to be destroyed. But its destroyer, "The Knight of Arts and Industry," with his belief in the great writers and the fine arts—"They are the quintessence of all"—action, and agriculture, is a very typical eighteenth century figure:

> Nor from his deep retirement banish'd was
> Th' amusing care of rural industry.

In accordance with this not-to-be-helped eighteenth centuryism is the curious preface:

"This poem being writ in the manner of Spenser, the obsolete words, and a simplicity of diction in some of the lines, which borders on the ludicrous, were necessary to make the imitation more perfect;" so that a tinge of the burlesque attitude towards Spenser lingers still.

It was the end of a strange tradition, and by the time Beattie published his *Minstrel*[8] it was at last possible to indulge in Spenserisings without a benignant smile. For this reason alone this highly artificial production is interesting, for this, and for no other; its position now being only historical.

Beattie, whose genius was imitative, neither had nor cultivated a special nicety of imitation. His early poems, written in the metre of Gray's "Elegy," have, only occasionally, stanzas which one would say were happily mimetic. He did not seek to copy. At one time from one poet, at another from another, he learnt what he wanted, and applied it to his own purposes; sonority from Gray, or the wide flowing of Spenser's stanza where a disquisition style was desirable. An academic figure, he did the academic things. Speaking from the accepted standpoint, he antagonised Hume in his "Essay on Truth," and wrote so completely in the tone of the sentiment of his day that we find Johnson overcome to tears on reading aloud the fourth stanza of "The Hermit":

[8] 1770. "The Castle of Otranto" had been published in 1764. The "Old English Baron" followed in 1777.

'Tis night, and the landscape is lovely no more;
I mourn, but, ye woodlands, I mourn not for you;
For morn is approaching, your charms to restore,
Perfum'd with fresh fragrance, and glittering with dew:
Nor yet for the ravage of Winter I mourn;
Kind Nature the embryo blossom will save,
But when shall Spring visit the mouldering urn?
O when shall it dawn on the night of the grave?

verses to us more elegant than moving.[9]

The object of *The Minstrel,* as defined by its author, was to trace "the progress of a Poetical Genius." More accurately, the first canto is a ramble without a story about the visions, dreams, ideas that visit poetical youth. In the second canto, a Hermit enters to say that

Fancy enervates, while it soothes, the heart,

and that imagination must be supplemented by Philosophy and Science if man is to deal adequately with life. The tone of the first canto is romantic; aspiration fires the young; that of the second is staid and melancholy, for the world deceives:

Be all my prayer for virtue and for peace.

In the poem as completed one finds little of Spenser beyond the rules of his stanza. The metrical tone is no more his than the short reflection on Mutability:

Even sad vicissitude amused his soul.[10]

---

[9] Cf. Drummond's lines, no doubt familiar to Beattie.

Woods cut again do grow,
Bud doth the rose and daisy, winter done,
But we, once dead, no more do see the sun.

[10] But the curiously banal line happens to express curiously accurately what actually happened with Spenser.

There are, however, two things to be said about this writing. In the first place the attitude of patronage has wholly gone, for Beattie had read Percy, and doubtless also Hurd—Gothic was no longer a frivolity:

> Whate'er of lore tradition could supply
> From gothic tale, or song, or fable old,
> Rous'd him, still keen to listen and to pry.

In the second place the real interest of Beattie's performance is not in any formal reference to Spenser. Rather is it in the clear indications of gathering strength in the new interest in wild nature that was to form so considerable a part of the Romantic Revival:

> Lo! where the stripling, wrapt in wonder, roves
> Beneath the precipice o'erhung with pine;
> And sees on high, amidst th' encircling groves,
> From cliff to cliff the foaming torrents shine:
> While waters, woods, and winds, in concert join.

It is true the interest is academic, for Beattie was academic, but half the *material* of the coming nature-poetry is here—a lifeless skeleton *before* the life, the lifeless but elegant skeleton. It is the simulacrum, not of a movement that had expired, but of a movement that was yet to be.

In this effort then, the academic imitators of Spenser expire. Henceforward, when Spenser's stanza is used, it is used as part of the inherited material of poetry, and when, in "Childe Harold" Byron writes in it, or in "The Revolt of Islam," Shelley, or in the "Eve of St. Agnes," Keats, one thinks no more of their doing so than if they had written in blank verse.

Simultaneously, as a matter of course, the spirit of Spenser begins to work, and, from Blake through Wordsworth to Tennyson, his leaven is alive. One can appreciate the working of this leaven first in the boy Chatterton. Chatterton, a marvellous beginner, with a defiant Chivalric note very much his own, awaits still a full and sympathetic exposition of his poetical powers. "The Rowley Poems," [1] with their intended archaism, have fastened on him the reputation of an imitator, and criticism has been occupied in demonstrating how unlike fifteenth century English his writing is. But his vocabulary and mis-spellings, mislearnt from old dictionaries rather than from a glossary to Chaucer, are an inessential matter. What counts is the new poetical impression to be derived from his outpourings.

However, original as his work is, one poetical inspirer he had, and though his tone and manner are very different from Spenser's, one feels everywhere that he had been reading him. In the Rowley poems Chatterton has some varieties of metre, but the verse he usually adopts is a variant of Spenser's stanza in the "Faerie Queene." Oddly enough he never uses the actual stanza, which consisted of nine lines,[2]

[1] The dates of composition are roughly 1767-1770.

[2] Spenser's stanza rhymed on this principle ab, ab, bc, bcc, or in figures 1, 2; 1, 2; 2, 3; 2, 3; 3 three rhymes in nine lines, of which the first is used twice, which, indeed, it must be to be a rhyme at all, the second four times, and the third thrice. Chatterton accepts the chief obligation,—to find four instances of one rhyme, an obligation in English not easy to fulfil, but at the

substituting for it one of ten. The first eight lines are the same, but as the sense does not run to an end in the ninth line, but waits for a concluding couplet, one does not feel in the seventh or eighth that one is about to close a Spenserian stanza. Consequently, it must be usually in the first six lines, more probably in the first four, that one may look to catch a Spenserian echo. These echoes are often altogether absent, very often distant, but when they do properly occur the sound and sense are so near that they speak eloquently of Chatterton's inspirer. Take this from "The Battle of Hastings":

> As when a flyghte of cranes, that take their waie
> In householde armies thro the flanched skie,
> Alike the cause, or companie or prey,
> If that perchaunce some boggie fenne is nie.

or this from a "Balade of Charitie":

> Beneathe an holme, faste by a pathwaie side,
> Which dide unto Seyncte Godwine's covent lede.

These are not imitations, rather recollections, though conscious recollections.

In succeeding poetry we come upon little so intentionally near. Wordsworth imitates Thomson, in his character sketches of himself and Coleridge, written in

third obligation, the obligation to find another rhyme three times, he breaks down. He therefore extends the stanza to ten lines, and finishes it off with a d couplet. Chatterton's common stanza has ten lines with four rhymes, three—a, c, d occurring twice and presenting no difficulty, the single trouble being to find one rhyme, the b rhyme four times in each stanza. In place then of the Spenserian ab, ab, bc, bc, c we have the easier ab, ab, bc, bc, dd.

his pocket copy of "The Castle of Indolence," and Keats Spenser, professedly, in some verses not otherwise memorable than that in them he obviously considers a fay might be a creature of small size. Yet speaking almost without qualification, the influence now is a general one, and while the subsequent poetry is indebted to the spirit of Spenser, there is no longer the Spenserising game.

One turns back to Spenser's own time to mark a merely imitative influence, or to express it more precisely, a sequent habit. Edward Fairfax, the most famous, if not the greatest of English translators, published his version of Tasso's "Jerusalem" in 1600. Spenser, it need not be said, had read Tasso, and in his Bower of Bliss Book borrows freely from Tasso's dealings with Armida, so freely that Fairfax in translating finds in some passages Spenser's verses to his hand. For instance, at the end of his Second Book Spenser has:

> Withall she laughed, and she blusht withall,
> That blushing to her laughter gaue more grace
> And laughter to her blushing.

Fairfax, at the end of his fifteenth:

> Withall she smiléd, and she blush'd withall;
> Her Blush her Smiling, Smiles her Blushing graced.

where, though the translation of Tasso is very exact, so is Fairfax's memory of the former translator.

Similarly, when Spenser translates "Jerusalem," Canto XVI., verse 15:

> So passeth, in the passing of a day,
> Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre,

the actual translator is, in his turn, influenced by the very words of Spenser:

> So, in the passing of a Day, doth pass
> The Bud and Blossom of the Life of Man,

so much so that Fairfax makes his translation the least morsel less exact than Spenser's for the purpose of variation. Again,

> The ioyous birdes shrouded in chearefull shade,

of the Bower of Bliss appear in the same passage of Fairfax, Canto XVI., verse 12, as:

> The joyous Birds, hid under green-wood Shade.

These are curious instances of a translator imitating an imitation of his author, and the more to be remarked as Fairfax in the general run of his translation does not remind one of Spenser in the least. There was no reason that he should. The coherent and martial narrative of Tasso affords occasion only rarely for those digressions in which turns of Spenserian fancy can most easily be displayed. The style of Fairfax is not the style of Spenser. Adopting not the stanza of Spenser but that of his original,[3] Fairfax produces a succession of verses that have nothing lingering about them. And if it were not for their number we might say that they were not more speedy than succinct. Nevertheless, and with all these divergences, here and there one gets the master's voice. It is not only in seductive passages,

> Thus sung the Spirit false; and stealing Sleep
> To which her Tunes intic'd his heavy Eyes,

[3] ab, ab, ab, cc.

nor even only in quiet descriptions,

> The Heav'ns were clear, and wholesom was the Air,
> High Trees, sweet Meadows, Waters pure and good,

though, of course, it is chiefly in these, but sometimes in the martial account itself. One verse describing the combat of Tancred and Argantes has the very movement of the poet of chivalry:

> With a tall Ship so doth a Gally fight,
> When the still Winds stir not th' instable Main,
> Where this in Nimbleness, as that in Might
> Excells: that stands, this goes and comes again,
> And shifts from Prow to Prow with Turnings light.[4]

After all, unless a poet is, like Milton, singular in his own age, his best echoes will be found in the poetry of his time. Webster writes nearer to Shakespeare than the Elizabethan practisers of Victoria's day, and Phineas Fletcher in his "Purple Island" and Giles Fletcher in "Christ's Victorie and Triumph" are sometimes nearer to Spenser than the elaborate efforts in imitation of Gilbert West. They do not find it difficult on occasion to express their own thoughts in Spenser's manner, indeed, it would be more true to say that they sometimes find it difficult not so to express them, for their imitations are seldom conscious. They had read Spenser, and his music was in their ears; unawares it creeps occasionally into the earlier work of the younger, Giles, and Phineas Fletcher thinks nothing of occasionally forming the details of his allegory or the

[4] May this have supplied Fuller with his image about the wit combats of Shakespeare and Jonson?

fashion of his Pastorals upon the approved models of his master. But in doing this he had no more intention of imitating "The Faerie Queene" or "The Shepheardes Calender" than Johnson in his "London" of imitating Twickenham. Patterns of a particular kind had been accepted—but Phineas Fletcher in style and temper has no more affinity to Spenser than Johnson has to Pope. Those who say otherwise have glanced but cursorily at "his wearie song." Quarles in his verses "To The Ingenious Composer of This Pastorall The Spenser of This Age" means no more than a typical compliment to success in ornament and allegory.

"The Purple Island or The Isle of Man," first published in 1633, but probably finished much earlier,[5] is a poem in twelve cantos, of which the first five are anatomically descriptive of the physical body, and the second five personificatory of the senses and the qualities. In the last two cantos there is a battle between the good and bad qualities, in which the bad, supported by the Dragon or Satan, are finally overthrown by the good, assisted by the Redeemer.

One expects and finds in the first five cantos an absence of memorable poetry, but there is much sound physical knowledge and some sound medical advice. In the next five, where there are many more poetical openings, those taken chief advantage of concern the bad qualities. The good qualities, with the exception of Chastity, are not poetically good. The most readable

[5] "Raw essays of my very unripe years and almost childhood." Phineas Fletcher was born in 1582.

cantos are the last, for they are the only two in which there is action.

Using a divergent stanza,[6] Fletcher's quality of imagination is quite different from Spenser's, and no one reading the verses could possibly think they were by Una's poet. There is no intention of imitation. What happens, to put it bluntly, is that Fletcher sometimes steals. His personifications are not in Spenser's style of the picturesque, but his habit of personification was doubtless caught from the immortal Allegory, and, in places, particular personifications are indebted to Spenser for several of their traits. Some things are directly plagiarised. In describing the body Fletcher actually allows himself to print "Part circular and part triang'lar":[7] in Canto II., verse 33, he refers to "The Island's common cook, Concoction,"[8] and he copies from "The Ruines of Time,"[9]

> Where is th' Assyrian Lion's golden hide.

In Canto XI., verse 30, he takes from the description of Irenae drooping,

> All so a lilie, prest with heavie rain.[10]

---

[6] ab, ab, ccc.

[7] P. I., c. I., verse 44. Cf. F. Q., Book II., c. IX., verse 22:

> The frame thereof seemd partly circulare
> And part triangulare.

[8] Cf. F.Q., Book II., c. IX., verse 31:

> "The maister Cooke was cald *Concoction.*"

[9] P. I., Canto VII., verse 4:

> What nowe is of th' *Assyrian* Lyonesse.

The *Persian* Bear also appears.

[10] Cf. F.Q., Book V., c. XII., verse 13.

The shepherds' life of quiet [1] (Canto XII., verses 5-6) is from Melibee, and in parts owes much to hints from Spenser. Fletcher copies Chaucer too, on occasion, and his picture of Dissemblance in Canto VII., verse 49,

> He steals his dagger with false smiling art,

owes its smile to "The Knight's Tale." [2]

In short, all through, one comes on recollections, the recollections, however, of a person distinct. One does not say "This is Spenser," but "This author has been reading Spenser."

No doubt, on rare occasions, with an original occasionally so exactly remembered, and therefore presumably so constantly studied, one perceives also a general influence. Spenser did not write the following, but he might have written it:

> So when a fisher-swain by chance hath spi'd
> A big-grown pike pursue the lesser frie,
> He sets a withy labyrinth beside,
> And with fair baits allures his nimble eye.[3]

but such reproductions of tone are exceedingly rare, for Fletcher's feeling is not Spenser's.

Not in any sense a great poet, Fletcher is not even specifically a poet. Specifically he is a sensible man and

[1] Cf. F.Q., Book VI., verse 19, *et. seq.*

[2] The smyler with the knyf under the cloke.

[3] Canto I., verse 55. Cf. also Canto IV., verse 33:

> But see, the smoak mounting in village nigh,
> With folded wreaths steals through the quiet aire.

the description of Parthenia, Canto X., verse 36, and that of the soothing of the battle wounds, Canto XII., verse 11.

a sensible moralist who, by habituating himself to poetry, had learnt what poetry was, and was able to compass it. He thus easily gives his thoughts poetical form, and manages to adorn even his physical allegory with stray poetical excursions,[4] yet it is seldom that the thing he feels is felt imaginatively. When he comes at the end to speak of heavenly joys, his imagination quickens:

> There sweet delights, which know nor end, nor measure;
> No chance is there, nor eating times succeeding:
> No wastfull spending can empair their treasure;
> Pleasure full grown, yet ever freshly breeding;
> Fulnesse of sweets excludes not more receiving:
> The soul still big of joy, yet still conceiving;
> Beyond slow tongue's report, beyond quick thought's perceiving.[5]

and there is more than a semblance of enthusiasm in the closing combat, where his description of the Dragon[6] gave a hint to Milton for his Fiend; yet, in the main, the poem, where it pleases, owes its attraction to the niceness, not to the imaginativeness, of the thought:

> His bed of wool yeelds safe and quiet sleeps,
> While by his side his faithfull spouse hath place.[7]

But even here he merely says this, enumerating the delights of the shepherd's life, and is immediately off to something else. The poet has not been as much moved by what he says as one oneself has. It is the reader who stops to realise and to feel.

[4] e.g. Canto V., verse 65.
[5] Canto XII., 75.
[6] Canto XII., 59.
[7] Canto XII., 6.

Again sometimes, even when he does continue, the pitch of feeling is not sustained, as in the stanza Campbell admired, with its admirable opening :

> As when a youth, bound for the Belgick warre,
> Takes leave of friends upon the Kentish shore.[8]

In fact, in illustration of the greatest writers, the poem has as much interest as displaying Milton's use of Fletcher (and in this like another of Fletcher's writings, the "Apollyonists") as Fletcher's use of Spenser.

One sees the divergency between the styles if one turns to the "Piscatorie Eclogues," a production that in literary history obviously followed upon Spenser's Pastorals. Yet, while the prior existence of Spenser was a literary necessity, these Eclogues are not to be mistaken by a novice for his writing. If occasionally in phrases, copying rather than imitating :

> A Fisher-lad (no higher dares he look)
> Myrtil, fast down by silver Medwaye's shore.[9]

Fletcher uses Spenser's voice, this is the absolute exception; and, indeed, pitching the whole to sober piscatory note, the poet, throughout, preserves his own manner and sings his own song. In Fletcher's poems there is nothing of Spenser's richness; the feeling is even thin, as if it had to be spread to cover prolixity. They are, moreover, pious in a sense Spenser's certainly are not—an aroma of Churchmanship and virtue

[8] Canto XI., 16.

[9] Eclogue III., 1.

slightly secure. One has to deal with a good man rather than with an emotional one.[10]

Akin in spirit to Phineas, but with much more emotionally to say, is his brother Giles, who, in his "Christ's Victorie and Triumph" (1610), is poetically upheld by what approaches devout rapture.

One sees clearly that Milton had read this poem also, and had been influenced by it both in image and thought.[1] On his side once or twice Fletcher makes the freest use of Spenser.[2] There is the last stanza of the First Book:

> Bring, bring, ye Graces, all your silver flaskets,

[10] To emphasise the divergence, Stella (Eclogue VII.) is a dark beauty; see verses 17 and 18:

> So is my love an Heav'n; her hair a Night,
> Her shining forehead Dian's silver light.

I please myself with supposing that this virtuous amorosity had been conned by Wordsworth (verse 23):

> Stella, thine eyes are those twin-brothers fair,
> Which tempests slake, and promise quiet Seas:
> No marvel then if thy brown shadie hair,
> Like Night, portend sweet rest and gentle ease.

[1] The Miltonic borrowings are not so marked as those from Phineas—a phrase or two only. But the Fairy attendants on the Visionary Banquet in "Paradise Regained" were evidently suggested by Giles Fletcher's Spenserian introductions in the Temptation canto.

[2] Giles Fletcher's style has more affinity to Spenser's than that of his brother, but the actual plagiarisms or borrowings are much less numerous. The well-known instance (C.V. and T., Book II., stanza 23, and F.Q., Book I., c. IX., verse 33), where he quotes two lines without quotation marks, has encouraged a legend on this head. It is perhaps worth while remarking that the context

the last of the Second, where the Birds and Winds and Water "attune their noyse": and the chief passage of the "Temptation in the Wilderness," a mere, though faint variant of Armida's garden and the Bower of Bliss.

But no more than his brother is Giles Fletcher a proper imitator. He, too, is an original poet, though perhaps with less originality, or, should we say, peculiarity, of temperament Of him, at least, it may be said that he is a descendant of Spenser, clothing his own emotion and his own ideas in a variant of Spenser's style. The relation is not that of Palma Vecchio to Titian, rather that of the Young Tennyson to Keats, though this last comparison favours his genius unduly. A religious man who thought poetically and a poet of the second order, he would not necessarily have been a poet but for "The Faerie Queene." There is a weakness in the afflatus—he does not seem to speak out. Perhaps he was oppressed by his subject, though by this it is not meant he would have shone on any other less definitively religious. Such as it is, and as he treats it, a subject largely unsuited to poetry, it is handled with more reverence than by Milton,

shows he means to quote. Satan leads the Redeemer to a cave of Despair: whereupon Giles Fletcher writes:

> Ere long they came neere to a balefull bowre,
> Much like the mouth of that infernall caue,
> That gaping stood, all commers to deuoure.
> Darke, dolefull, dreary,—like a dreary graue,
> That still for carrion carkases doth craue.

or, in prose, "much like the mouth of that cave in Spenser, whose description of which you will recognise in the fourth and fifth lines." *Dreary* replaces *greedie,* otherwise the quotation is exact.

with the reverence that became a believer not a disputant. To students of Spenser it is on account of his music that Giles Fletcher is interesting, for, at his best, his music, though not Spenser's, is Spenserian :[3]

> So downe the silver streames of Eridan,
> On either side bank't with a lilly wall,
> Whiter then both, rides the triumphant swan,
> And sings his dirge, and prophecies his fall,
> Diuing into his watrie funerall.[4]

It need not be said that, unlike his master, Giles Fletcher is no magical master of fluent language, that he begins his sacred poem with allegory that, though serious, is too prolonged, and that, though not dull on account of prolixity (his poem being of manageable length), he seldom succeeds in capturing the attention.

Yet those brothers were both considerable poets. Both, on occasion, say things with the strange felicity (unreachable by any labour) of true poetry; the poetical imagination speaking. Placed beside either, the

[3] His stanza ab, ab, b, ccc (the same as Phineas, except for the omission of the third B), is, of course, never used by Spenser.

[4] It should be added that sometimes Fletcher writes remarkably *unlike* Spenser, and this also sometimes when he is at his very best. He is describing in the opening of the Fourth Book the onrush of Spring :

> the wood's late-wintry head
> Wide flaming primroses set all on fire,

which is more like Francis Thompson's writing than Spenser's. Equally unlike Spenser is his account of the perpetual Spring in the Heaven of Bliss :

> For things that passe are past : and in this field
> The indeficient Spring no Winter feares.

Spenserian imitators of the eighteenth century look very polite and small.

Such considerations bring home to us Spenser's supremacy, without considering further labours in personification by writers of less note, the more especially that the most curious of them all, the portentous "Psyche" of Joseph Beaumont, owes its existence much more to Phineas Fletcher's poem on the body than to "The Faerie Queene." Of Spenser Beaumont by no means professes himself a disciple, speaking of him in depreciatory terms as "manacled in thick[5] and peevish Rhyme," and adding equivocally:

> Right fairly dress'd were his welfeatured *Queen,*
> Did not her Mask too much her beauties screen,

a dictum which perhaps means that the interest of the narrative obscures the moral allegory. This, indeed, was not Beaumont's peculiar fault, and his "Psyche" might have been written to prove to what vapidity one may be driven on the opposite course. For though Beaumont has no sufficient poetical qualities to make vital any subject, his fatal defect is this, that he has no narrative interest. To call Pity a nimble nymph, and Conscience Syneidesis leaves matters where they were, while to say of Hell that

> The Hall was roof'd with everlasting *Pride,*
> Deep paved with *Despair,*

is to state what gains nothing from capitals and italics. It was the purpose of the poem "to represent a *Soul* led by divine *Grace*, and her *Guardian Angel,* (in fervent

[5] "*Thick*" is an absurd and happy expression. Spenser's verse is thick precisely in the sense in which Beaumont's verse is *thin*.

Devotion) through the different temptations and Assaults, of *Lust*, of *Pride*, of *Heresy*, of *Persecution*, and of *Spiritual Dereliction*, to a holy and happy *Departure* from *temporal Life*, to heavenly *Felicity*: Displaying by the way, the *Magnalia Christi*, his *Incarnation* and *Nativity*; his *Flight* into *Egypt*, his *Fasting* and *Temptation*, his chief *Miracles*, his being *Sold* and *Betrayed*, his *Institution of the Holy Eucharist*, his *Passion*, his *Resurrection* and *Ascension*; which were his mighty Testimonies of his *Love* to the *Soul.*" There is, therefore, at the beginning and end a plain allegory, and in the middle, occupying half of the huge production, the main narrative of the New Testament told by Phylax to Psyche, as twenty years later Raphael spoke to Adam of the War in Heaven. The length of the poem as well as the absence of real poetical quality has secured its mortality; for Beaumont carries a pleasantly fluent course, and is not unreadable, further than that one is not interested to read.

> The waves came crowding one upon another
> To their fair *Lord* their chaste salute to give.

It is writing without poetical character,—the furniture of a poem. A placeman and an easy cleric, Beaumont does not touch warm hands with humanity. One speaks of Spenser the artist rather than of Spenser the moralist, but this author's couplet in his verses on Home:

> And keep House in peace, tho' all
> Th' Universe's Fabric fall,

reveals a depth of moral un-interest never plumbed by

any author who compasses the great. It is true on other occasions he has sayings of higher pitch:

> No pains so painful are to those who know
> Their Soul's Activity, as lazy Rest.

But one feels, throughout, Beaumont is a mere *Say-er*, a preacher who had not learnt reality from the pulpit. Some of his ingenuosities, indeed, betray the ordinary citizen, and his revelation of the purpose of his dead wife's family prayers is the climax of contented bathos:

> Nor could her Servants scape her pious care
> Whom she more truly serv'd than they did Her,
> Watching to keep them in religious fear
> And in the bounds of sober Order; for
> Unless their *God* they learn to serve, said she,
> How can they faithful service do to me?

That a writer, despite occasional felicities, thus uninspired, should have written the longest poem in English (some 40,000 lines of allegoric story) is, however, unwitting tribute to the fashion Spenser's novelty had set.[6]

[6] I have not found in dipping into Beaumont (for I do not profess to have read the entire poem), more than occasional lines, and those immemorable, which Spenser might have written. There are some few echoes in the second canto (Psyche's adventure with Aphrodisius) e.g. in the account of the coming of Charis:

> As when the Child, ventring his feet to prove,
> Carelessly stumbles to some Precipice;
> His tender Nurse, wing'd both with fear and love,
> Makes on amain, with most intentive eyes.

And in the "Procession of the Seasons," Canto IV.:

> At last came drooping *Winter* slowly on,
> For frost hung heavy on his heels; the *year*
> Languish'd in Him, and looked old and wan:
> He quak'd and shiver'd through his triple fur.

Of Spenser's more general influence on the poets who immediately succeeded him one may speak less particularly.

William Browne of Tavistock,[7] an actual student of Spenser, owed to "The Faerie Queene" his incentive to wander in his own new-invented pastoral province. For the world of "Britannia's Pastorals" is very unlike Spenser's—a much more country place. Spenser is long, Browne tedious. Spenser is discursive; Browne does not even finish his episodic episodes. We may say, in fact, that he went to school to Spenser without learning anything of his art. Without the sense of general narrative, he has produced a poem which, though very pretty in places, is only pretty in parts.[8]

The description of the Angel of the Annunciation uses, as the Swinburnian practisers of 1880, a diction made current:

His head was crowned with its own golden hair,
Which down his back its dainty riches spread.

Beaumont's stanza is not Spenser's, but an inartistic one of six decasyllabic lines (ab, ab, cc), the concluding couplet of which affords too easy opportunity for occasional and unintentional sallies into the art of *Whistlecraft*.

[7] 1591-1645. He was the author of "Britannia's Pastorals," an unfinished poem some 10,000 lines in length, written in decasyllabic couplets and in no sense Chivalric; "The Shepherd's Pipe," which strangely lacks everything of delight that "The Shepheardes Calender" contains; some visions (six sonnets) weakly imitative of Spenser's Visions:

I saw a silver swan swim down the Lea,

an ineffective Masque, and some Love songs, Elegies, and Epigrams, which, though sometimes of quaint interest, stop short of charm.

[8] The country similes, generally long and detailed, are especially pretty, sometimes indeed much prettier than the narrative in which they are set.

It is fair to say that he expressly declares Sidney's Muse to have been his "mover," and that his poem neither challenges nor invites comparison with "The Faerie Queene," but references are frequent. There are reminiscences of the suffering tree, the Cave of Despair, and the "calmy bay,"[9] a good deal of allegorising—sometimes political, Britain figuring as Idya—some personifying of rivers, two catalogues of trees, and two episodes of fairies, which, however, are of the Lilliputian tribe. There is a reference in his "Inner Temple Masque" to Gryll, to the Remora in his "Elegy on Mr. William Hopton," and in his "Fido," a lengthy one to Timias and the wounded Amoret. Altogether in his poems there are some ten explicit commendations of "The Faerie Queene," Colin Clout, or Spenser. And yet, with all this, it is the rarest thing to meet even a line that Spenser might have written. The real influence is purely general. What merits are Browne's are his own—an episodic but individual descriptive power not always merely pretty, and an episodic but distinct gift of dramatic narrative. The first book of Browne's pastorals is amorphous, but the second has undoubted claims, and came home both in its virtues and its failings to the poet of "Endymion." Browne's fluency of prolix fancy is too tremendous, but we have the right to trace its initial spring to the impetus of Spenser.

[9] For pity make
It fast unto a rock near land!
Where every calmy morn I'll stand.
"Britannia's Pastorals," Book II., song 1.

On William Drummond,[10] it is commonly said, Spenser's influence is also marked, but I have not been able to satisfy myself of this. Like Browne, Drummond had read Sidney, and Mr. Ward has made clear his indebtedness to Italian poetry. Certainly he had read "The Faerie Queene," and so free a borrower from others does, on the rarest occasion, borrow from Spenser also.[1] We can see that his "still and calmy mood" is the "still and calmy bay" of the Bower of Bliss, and the following might almost have had quotation marks:

> I know that all beneath the moon decays,
> And what by mortals in this world is brought,
> In Time's great periods shall return to naught.[2]

but such single reproductions are not in themselves evidence of a general influence.

What is true is that Drummond reaches his best *level* as a poet of passing away.[3] His own great sorrow, the early loss of his beloved, turned his thoughts to a survey of Death while he was still vital, and so could write of it as on a theme in some degree artistic.

And on this subject, his melancholy musing on Mutability has a gracious tone that reminds one of Spenser,

[10] 1585-1649.

[1] "Poems," The Second Part, song 2.

[2] "Poems," The Second Part, sonnet 2, with which compare "Flowers of Sion," "To the memory of the most Excellent Lady, Jane Countess of Perth."

> Sith fairest things thus soonest have their end.

[3] Drummond's most characteristic though rarest *height* is reached by a power of vivid phrase:

> "The ghastly splendours of the night."

has a more general and gracious tone than it could have had, had Spenser not sung his exquisite lament.

I indulge myself, as I conclude this account of the poetry of Chaucer and Spenser, with a word by way of retrospect. The study of Chaucer was never more intelligent than it is to-day, never so well informed. We enjoy as we understand his humour, made additionally quaint to us by the added quaintness time has lent. We recognise in him the father of the English poetry of observation, the first great English comedian. And yet it must be said that while we read, appreciate, and enjoy him, he does not influence us. I suppose he never much influenced, certainly now he does not influence at all the sequent imagination of the young.

It is, it has always been, otherwise with Spenser. From the days when Shakespeare read him, through Milton, Chatterton, Tennyson, to our present day and Mr. Bridges, he has always enlarged and quickened the poetical imaginations of the English. Even his temporary obscuration, during the ascendancy of the Anglo-Gallic School, was never a complete obscuration in so far as the poets were concerned. It was and is another matter with the general public, with whom we can never look to see him a favourite. He never has been, and never could be a widely popular writer. Even to-day as a poet he is neglected by students; we have long treatises on his sources, on the Italian influence, on the ancestry and meaning of his allegory, political and moral, but three literary essayists write of the poetry of Chaucer for one on that of "The Faerie

Queene." Nevertheless, by those who read him he is read as a poet; not for the light he throws on mediaeval manners, not for quaintness, not as the most readable book in Middle English, not for any *Chaucerian* interest, but for his poetry. In so far as he lives, and with those with whom he lives at all, he lives as a living writer. His poetical appeal belongs to no time, and cannot by time be dimmed. It is so strong it breaks through on first contact. The imaginations of those too young and too ignorant of life to be moved by Shakespeare, the imaginations of those old enough to be weary of the game of Reality, the young and the dreamer, will always be catching fire from this Sun that will always be shining.

CHAPTER VII

THE FAERIES OF SPENSER

Spenser's faëries are not the fairies of the "Midsummer Night's Dream," the elfkins of Shakespeare. About Spenser's knights and ladies there is nothing diminutive. They are creatures of illusion, fays, beings from the land of Enchantment or Eastern Dream, and in this ordinariness of size they undoubtedly keep to the original Faëry idea.

Warton, commenting on the tradition of the coeval existence of Arthur and the Fayrie Queen, and discussing the word Fayrie, mentions that in Chaucer it appears sometimes for Hell or Hades,

> Pluto that is King of Fayrie.[1]

and quotes the line from "The Squire's Tale" about the brazen horse where the word clearly means "illusion" or "enchantment," or "from the land of illusion, enchantment."[2]

> It was of Fayrie, as the people deem'd.

[1] "Merchant's Tale."

[2] I adopt Keightley's obvious interpretation. Warton himself is either mistaken here or else for once writing loosely. He quotes the line as corroborative of the former about Pluto. "That is," he says, "the people thought this wonderful horse was the work of the devil, and made in hell," which is clearly not the *necessary*

"The fiction of the Fayries," he continues, "is supposed to have been brought, with other fantastic extravagancies of the like nature, from the eastern nations, while the European Christians were engaged in the holy war," and he goes on to connect them with the Persian Peri, who were of both sexes, and the Arab ginns or genies. He does not deny that the notions "of giants, necromancers, enchantments, &c." were established in Europe before the Crusades (as indeed we know from the Icelandic sagas and the Celtic mythology), but suggests that the northern portion of these fables may be due to an admixture of eastern race. And if this last suggestion open too wide a field to speculation, we may at least admit that the indigenous European notions of Faërie were reinforced by what was heard during the Crusades and from the Moorish incursions.

How then, to continue for ourselves, did such indigenous notions arise and what were they?

In regard to their origin, to put the easiest explanation first:

(*a*) We find in all countries, and connected with religion, notions of beings of a semi-religious significance, not Gods or Goddesses, but extra-human, filling up vacant places in Earth or Sea, in forests, caverns or grottoes, or personifying the life of natural objects such as trees, rivers, etc. There is the most

sense. It can only mean that, on the supposition that Chaucer always thought of the land of illusion as Hades, a supposition which can derive no additional force from the citation of passages that may carry a much less limited meaning.

familiar example of the fauns, dryads, nymphs, nereids, satyrs of Greece; and it is certainly possible that those notions, wherever we may find them, have no further origin than themselves. They may spring up anywhere and everywhere as spontaneous exertions of varying fancy. Thus one nation believes in Dryads, another in Ginns, another in Fairies.

On the other hand, it is usually assumed, whatever may be true of pre-Christian ages, that such of these notions as are found in Christian Europe are relics of previous religious systems.

(*b*) Taking this view, it is suggested first generally that

(1) The European Faerie race may be only one of the vestiges of the old Pagan mythologies dispossessed by Christianity. There is no greater commonplace of mediaeval learning than that when people began to believe in Christianity they did not at once disbelieve in the Gods of their former faith. They did not simply say—"This is the true religion and our former religious ideas were quite mistaken. Those old Gods never in fact existed at all, their whole existence was in our erring imagination." What they said was this—"We now believe in the true God. Men were mistaken in paying worship to those old Gods who existed doubtless, but were false gods or devils. It was not the belief in their existence, but men's worship of them, that was error." Thus Venus, during the early Christian ages, keeps her state in the Venusberg, and endeavours to seduce the true believer from the Faith.

Other pagan Gods became frank devils, and it is no stretch of imagination to suppose that out of such current notions there might emerge a belief in an immortal Faërie race not of the hierarchy of Heaven, and perhaps not of the hierarchy of Hell, though capable sometimes of so being understood confusedly:

Proserpina and alle hir Faerie.[3]

---

[3] As exemplifying this mingling, the following note (from "Crofton Croker," III., 180, 181, "The Mabinogion and Fairy Legends of Wales") has interest:

"The mythological region of *Annwn* deserves particular explanation. This term, in its most strict application, relates to the bardic theology; wherein it denotes, agreeably to its literal import, a privation of knowledge, being the contrast to *Gwynvyd*, or the intellectual world, by which the name happiness was defined. *Annwn* was the lowest point of animation, or the extreme of evil, in the circle of Abred, or metempsychosis, out of which the lapsed soul was imagined to re-ascend through all intermediate modes of existence, until it attained the human state, wherein ultimately it accumulated intelligence for enabling it to choose, and so to attach itself to good or evil, as a free agent. If good preponderated in the choice, the soul escaped by death to a higher circle of being. . . . But if man was attached to evil, by death the soul again fell into a lower state of being, corresponding with its turpitude in the circle of necessity and evil; and again it transmigrated to the state of humanity. . . .

"*Annwn*, in its more lax acceptation, as in the Mabinogion, is the unknown world, the invisible state, and fairy land. There is another Welsh term, very similar in sound, but differing in strict literal sense, yet not greatly so, as sometimes used. This term is *Andwvn*, the abyss, or bottomless pit, Tartarus."

Similarly Tasso ("Jerusalem," Book II.) tells us of Ismeno:

A Christian once, Macon he now adores
Nor could he quite his wonted Faith forsake;

(2) A second more definite suggestion is that the Faëry race derives from the local divinities of Gaul through some confusion with the Fates. "When[4] the Romans conquered Gaul, they found everywhere a worship of local divinities, *Matrae*, *Matres*, or *Matronae Augustae*, as they were called in inscriptions written in Latin. These were generally represented as three in number, and thus afforded a remarkable analogy to the three *Parcae* or 'Fates' of classical belief. The two sets of goddesses were naturally identified. But in the vulgar speech of the soldiers and colonists the Roman Fates were called, not Parcae, but Fatae, a Low Latin form obtained by treating the neuter plural of fatum as if it were a feminine singular. *Fatae* then became a name of these Matronae or local 'mother-goddesses.' The cult of the *Matronae* was in the hands of colleges of priestesses or druidesses, generally nine in number;

But in his wicked Arts both oft implores
Help from the Lord, and aid from Pluto black.

It is irrelevant but curious that in the same stanza there is a line which may have been partially responsible for Dryden's title:

Achitophel so councill'd Absalom.

Some four months before Dryden's publication the name was connected with Shaftesbury, but Dryden's labours may have been noised abroad. "Scott's Dryden," IX., p. 200.

In another place (Book IX., verse 15) Tasso evidently thinks of the Fairies as the brood of Hell:

The Furies roar, the Ghosts and Fairies yell,
The Earth was fill'd with Devils, and empty Hell.

[4] "A Midsummer-Night's Dream," Appendix A, The Fairy World: by E. K. Chambers, 1897, referring here to L. F. A. Maury, "Les Fées du Moyen Age," and to Rhys, "Celtic Heathendom," p. 100.

and these druidesses appear to have practised magical rites, and to have possessed great power over the minds of the Celtic element in the population. It need hardly be said that when Christianity came, the reputation of the druidesses did not immediately vanish." This view is supported by an interesting etymological guess, for which Keightley claims credit. "Fata," he says, "was the original word significant of some sort of superior being, which word the Italians have retained; the Provençals and Spaniards made it Fada, and thence Hada. From Fata was founded a verb Fatare, to enchant, whence the French verb Faer, and its participle Faé; and so, Les chevaliers faés, and Les dames faées of the romances."[5]

A little earlier Keightley has the following: "The connexion between the Parcae and the Fairies of romance will be evident to any one who recollects how frequently the latter were attendant at the birth of heroes and princesses, foretelling their fortunes, or bestowing their good or evil gifts upon them. Or, if this should not please, the wife of Faunus, a rural deity, was named Fatua, as we are informed by Macrobius and Lactantius; and the nymphs, Donatus says, were from her called Fatuae: and Ariosto tells us that

> Queste ch' or Fate e dagli Antichi foro
> Già dette Ninfe e Dee con più bel nome.
> Canto I., de' cinque aggiunti al "Furioso."

Which of these is the true etymon we do not undertake to decide. The first connects itself with the Faery-

[5] "The Fairy Mythology": by Thomas Keightley, vol. I., p. 11.

ladies of romance; the other with the popular Elves, the tenants of the forests and groves." [6]

These last remarks lead us on to a third suggestion, that of Mr. Alfred Nutt.[7]

(3) That the whole Fairy world (not merely the northern elves, but the original Faeries themselves), took its origin in agricultural beliefs, in the belief in Earth powers. He is speaking specifically of Celtic mythology, and refers us back to "the dispossessed inmates of an Irish Pantheon," the "mysterious race known in Irish mythic literature as the Tuatha de Danann, the folk of the goddess Danu"; and he tells us that while the members of this race figure in a number of heroic legends, "as opponents and protectors

[6] Keightley, vol. I., p. 11.

[7] The Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare: "Popular Studies in Mythology, Romance, and Folk-lore": David Nutt, London, 1900.

Mr. Nutt is much interested in a passage from Nash quoted by Mr. Chambers:

"At the very time the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' was being composed or played, Nash wrote as follows: 'The Robin-goodfellows, elfs, fairies, hobgoblins of our latter age, which idolatrous former days and the fantastical world of Greece ycleped Fauns, Satyrs, Dryads, Hamadryads, did most of their pranks in the night'—a passage in which the parallel suggested is far closer and weightier in import than its author imagined."

With this we may compare Keightley, I., 157:

"In the popular creed (of Zeeland) there is some strange connexion between the elves and the trees."

And Tasso, speaking of Clorinda (Book II., verse 40), couples the Satyrs and the Fairies:

> The Satyrs rough, the Fawns, and Fairies wild
> She chaced oft, oft took, and oft beguil'd.

of mortal heroes, as wooers of mortal maidens, as lady-loves of valiant champions," in the very oldest of the legends "they come before us as the divine *dramatis personae* of a series of myths the theme of which is largely the agricultural prosperity of Ireland;" "they are associated with the origin and regulation of agriculture." Later, Mr. Nutt sums up the Irish matter thus: "The old Irish gods, themselves an outcome of the primitive agricultural creed, were worked into the heroic legends of the race, and suffered transformation into the wizard champions and enchantresses of the romances, but they never lost touch with their earliest forms."

If this, which Mr. Nutt assures us is true of Ireland, was also the method of imagining elsewhere, it gives an ultimate community of origin to the Fays of romantic tale, and the dairy elves of popular belief. It is commonly said of Shakespeare that he drew from at least two sources: the folk belief of his day (for Puck and Cobweb), and the romance literature of the previous four centuries (for Oberon and Titania). Yet on this theory the Oberon and Puck of Shakespeare may have a historical connection unknown to him.

This view of Mr. Nutt's is further interesting as explaining some of the persistent practices of the popular fairies. In the primitive world it was common to propitiate the Earth powers with human sacrifice,—an offering of our vitality to their vitality. "The practice of carrying off human children has its roots in the conception of the fairy as lord and giver of life" . . . "when the practice of sacrifice fell into disuse, the toll

levied regularly in the old days upon human life might come to wear in the popular mind the aspect of raids upon human by an inhuman society." So, shape shifting, known to Puck, is a very early belief, and "the love of neatness and orderly method so characteristic of the fairy world is easily referable to a time when all the operations of rural life formed part of a definite religious ritual." The brothers Grimm, in their essay introductory to Crofton Croker's "Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland," tell a curious story of a female fairy (variously named fairy, elf, and banshee) who wished to borrow a little oatmeal for her family. "The woman being afraid, granted the request of the Elf, and according to custom, treated her with some liquor, and bread and cheese, and offered to accompany her on the road. As they were going up an eminence above the town, the Banshee stopped, and with evident satisfaction told the woman that she might take her meal home again, she having now obtained the expected supply. The woman, without asking the Elf where she had procured it, took back her own with pleasure, and returned home. But how great was her surprise, when in a few minutes after she beheld the granary of a neighbouring farm in flames." This suggests burnt-offering.[8]

These, then, are the possible origins, unknown to

[8] In Ireland "Mayday is called la na Beal tina, and May-eve neen na Beal tina,—that is day and eve of Beal's fire, from its having been in heathen times consecrated to the god Beal, or Belus." Crofton Croker, I., 307.

Spenser, of his Faëries; and whatever view we take, it is clear that there is nothing in any origin to induce a belief in a size less than human. Indeed, as to size, the origins, with their early gods, would suggest a belief in super-human rather than in infra-human dimensions.[9]

The fays of romance were of ordinary proportions; in fact, as they were sometimes mere enchantresses, women, like Vivien, who had knowledge of magical arts, they could not but be so. Keightley, whose entertaining volumes are so readable as to have been underestimated by scholarship, quotes from the old romance of "Isaie le Triste," the account of Lancelot's abduction by Vivien when a child:

"La damoiselle qui Lancelot porta au lac estoit une *fée,* et en cellui temps estoient appellées *fees* toutes celles qui s'entremeloient d'enchantements et de charmes, et moult en estoit pour lors principallement en la Grand Bretaigne, et savoient la force et la vertu des parolles, des pierres, et des herbes, parquoi elles estoient en jeunesse, et en beaultee, et en grandes richesses, comment elles divisoient."

Keightley also quotes Holinshed, who, speaking of those who appear generally in legend as the ladies of

[9] Cf. The Irish Finnii and Regan's leap of two miles. Crofton Croker, II., p. 283.

Speaking of the Finnii of Erin, the author says in a note: "Their deeds were confined to no one part of the island, for hills, rocks, and stones in each province still testify their superhuman might, and many an extant poem and many a traditionary tale record their exploits."

the dark barge, tells us that it was believed "that king Arthur was not dead, but carried awaie by the Fairies into some pleasant place," and, in several places, the Elizabethan translators use the word fairy as a translation of the Latin Nympha. Conformably Chaucer, in his references to the fairies in his "Wife of Bath's Tale," says nothing to indicate that he thought of them as specially small; on the contrary, the old crone whom the knight marries is a fairy, and retains her human size when she turns into his beautiful bride.[10]

It was therefore not at all surprising to anyone that Spenser's faërie heroes should mingle with mortal men and women, or joust with human knights.

One passage may be quoted as conclusive on the question of stature: Calidore, when he finds Colin piping to his mortal love, is confronted by 'an hundred

[10] Chaucer uses the word elves for faëries, apparently indifferently; but so does Spenser without implying any limitation of size. It is said of Artegall falsely, III., 3, 26, "that he by an Elfe was gotten of a Fay."

To make Chaucer's idea of the size of his faëries clear two lines only are necessary:

> Whereas he saw upon a dance go
> Of ladies foure and twenty and yet mo.
>
> "Wife of Bath's Tale."

And Sir Thopas proposes to himself to marry an elf-queen, a project which assumes similarity of size.

It is interesting to note that by Dryden's time the tradition of smallness has become so fixed that he unconsciously mistranslates:

> The king of elves and *little* fairy queen
> Gamboled on heaths, and danced on every green.

naked maidens lilly white,' who dance around the Graces. These maidens are so beautiful that they might be faëries, and

> Whether it were the traine of beauties Queene,
> Or Nymphes or Faeries, or enchaunted show
> With which his eyes mote haue deluded beene,

he does not know. It is evident that no such doubt could have been entertained had not all been of similar dimensions.

In some matters Spenser's treatment is peculiar. Among royal faëries he deals exclusively with the Faëry Queen, clearly because Elizabeth had to be unrivalled; [1] and his short account of the Faëry race, read by Guyon at the end of the tenth canto of the Second Book, is a mere *melange* of Eastern or Spenserian imagining. Moreover, as a necessity of his scheme, his knightly heroes are not mortals but faëries. In Arthurian romance as in heroic Irish legend, "the woman of the immortal race stands before us in clearer outline and more vivid colouring than the man." "Nor," continues Mr. Nutt, "is the reason far to seek: the mortal hero is the centre of attraction: the love of the fairy maiden, who comes from her wonderland of eternal joys lured by his fame, is the most striking token and the highest guerdon of his prowess. To depict her in the most brilliant colours is the most

[1] Though he mentions King Oberon when speaking of Guyon, who

> knighthood tooke of good Sir *Huons* hand
> When with king *Oberon* he came to Faerie land.

II. 1, 6.

effectual way to heighten his glory." It is different with Spenser. As his heroes are faëries, the male faëry is much the most important, and the female heroine, Una or Pastorella, is generally mortal. Belphœbe, it is true, for the purposes of Elizabethan compliment, is of faëry and virgin origin—the daughter of Chrysogone and the Sun,—but she loves none, and, though offended by the attentions Timias pays to her twin-sister Amoret, permits him but the most distant worship.

Spenser's story is of faëry heroes and their adventures among mortal men and women, but between Faëry and Mortal there is no undeviating convention of love attraction. In the romances the mortal hero is loved commonly by the immortal maid. With the single and dubious exception of Scudamour and Amoret, for the quest is on his side, it is not so in Spenser. Yet it would be untrue to say that the contrary always occurs. Generally it does. The mortal Pastorella is sought by the immortal Calidore, as the mortal Florimell by the immortal Marinell, and Una is betrothed to the Red Cross Knight, but the love affairs of Artegall and Britomart have nothing faëry about them.

One interesting, if subsidiary, question remains. How did it happen that the Faëry race came to be looked on as diminutive?

(1) From the fading of tradition:

If the suggestions already adverted to—that the belief in the Faëry world had its origin in dying religions—be even partially accepted, it is easy to sup-

pose that the old gods might shrink in stature as well as in the rest of their heroic attributes. Eros dwindles to the Cupid of Valentine, as sincere imagining gives place to the idle amusements of fancy.

(2) From the fond handling of familiar belief:

We are all familiar with the invention of the Cherubs, and the brothers Grimm observe a fancy of small angels as taking shape in the twelfth or thirteenth century.[2]

Where the Faëries were looked upon as rural or household divinities such a process would be accelerated, and we should expect to find it most advanced in the belief of the Folk.

(3) From the mixing up of the Faëries and the Fays of Celtic and Eastern fancy, with the Dwarfs of Northern mythology and their various fanciful descendants—dwarfkins, elves, gnomes, kobolds, etc.

Even Mr. Nutt admits "that possibly, the diminutive size of the fairy race belongs more especially to Teutonic tradition as developed within the last 2000 years, and that in so far the popular element in Shakespeare's fairy world may be Teutonic rather than Celtic."

And Keightley tells us: "After the appearance of 'The Faerie Queen' all distinctions were confounded, the name and attributes of the real Fays or Faeries of romance were completely transferred to the little beings who, according to the popular belief, made 'the green sour ringlets whereof the ewe not bites.'"

[2] Cf. Giles Fletcher, "Christ's Victory in Heaven":

And little angels, holding hands, daunct all around.

References to diminutive size in Great Britain are quite early. There is, says Mr. Nutt, "a series of testimonies reaching back to the twelfth century, Gervase of Tilbury and Gerald the Welshman."

Gervase of Tilbury, as translated by Keightley, writes of those whom the English call Portunes:

"It is their nature to embrace the simple life of comfortable farmers, and when, on account of their domestic work, they are sitting up at night, when the doors are shut, they warm themselves at the fire, and take little frogs out of their bosom, roast them on the coals, and eat them. They have the countenance of old men, with wrinkled cheeks, and they are of a very small stature, not being quite half an inch high."[3]

And Gerald tells us of the adventures of Elidurus at the small statured fairy court:

"They had horses proportioned to themselves of the size of greyhounds."[4]

Oberon (the Elberich of German legend) "in the French traditions is only three feet high."[5]

Certainly, long before Shakespeare, the fairies were quite small in beliefs obtaining among the English

[3] Dimidium *pollicis*. Should we not read *pedis*? Keightley's note.

[4] The words of Giraldus are: "Apparuerunt ei homunculi duo, staturae quasi pygmaeae;" and later, "Equos habebant suae competentes modicitati, leporariis in quantitate conformes."

Giraldi Cambrensis "Itinerarium Kambriae," Lib. I., cap. VIII.

[5] "Il n'a que trois pieds de hauteur." The tradition was that a fairy not invited to his father's wedding gave as a gift that he should not grow after his third year.

people, not microscopic generally, but in appearance like children. "If you see an Elf in his true form," write the brothers Grimm, "he appears like a beautiful child a few years old, delicate and well shaped."[6]

Shakespeare, like other poets, amused his fancy by playing with the idea of smallness. His Cobweb and Peaseblossom in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" are as tiny as Queen Mab in "Romeo and Juliet."

About the royal pair we cannot be as certain. Mr. Chambers reminds us of the lines:

> There sleeps Titania sometime of the night
> Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight
> And there the snake throws her enamelled skin
> Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in,

---

[6] In Wales "the idea of the Fairies being diminutive is only current in Pembrokeshire and the adjoining districts."

We may note therefore (Crofton Croker, vol. III., p. 218) "Llewellyn's Dance," as told by David Shone: "Countless numbers of little figures, the size of children of three or four years old," and E. W.'s letter of what he saw in 1757, when he was a child at school and one day playing with other children: "They were clothed in red, like soldiers, with red handkerchiefs spotted with yellow about their heads. They seemed to be a little bigger than we, but of a dwarfish appearance" (Crofton Croker, III., 249).

And the following (quoted, like the former, from "A Relation of Apparitions of Spirits in the County of Monmouth, and the Principality of Wales): "P. W., who lived at the Ship in *Pont y Pool,* and born also in Trefethin parish, an honest, virtuous woman, when a young girl going to school, one time seeing the fairies dancing in a pleasant dry place under a crab-tree, and seeing them like children much of her own size, and hearing a small pleasant music among them, went to them, and was induced to dance with them" (Crofton Croker, III., 250).

which would give her a blanket fit for a being of inch dimensions, but elsewhere (IV., I. 1 and 2) we have from her, addressing Bottom :

> Come sit thee down upon this flowery bed
> While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,

where Shakespeare has evidently forgotten that he thought of her as minute. Besides, the "Indian Boy" was to be her page. In fact, I believe he thought throughout of Oberon and Titania as much larger than the other fairies. I can, however, find nothing fixing the size of Puck or Oberon.[7] It agrees, however, with what is here said of Titania, that Falstaff, when he believes himself, at Herne the Hunter's Oak, to be baited by Fairies, is really the sport of dressed-up human children.

But it was the tininess of Shakespeare's fairies that impressed itself on the literary imagination, and in

[7] Puck was apparently traditionally larger. See Keightley, II., p. 100.

"Burton, after noticing from Paracelsus those which in Germany 'do usually walk in little coats, some two foot long,' says : 'A bigger kind there is of them called with us Hobgoblins and Robin Goodfellows, that would, in those superstitious times, grind corn for a mess of milk, cut wood, or do any manner of drudgery work.'"

And that the leaders should be the largest is no extraordinary effort of imagination. In Crofton Croker, "Fairies or no Fairies," the chief is "of superior stature."

But Shakespeare may be merely mixing up. It is easy to get confused under the head of tininess. The dwarfkins who get through keyholes are yet large enough to offer a female dancing partner to the Count of Eilenburg (Keightley, II., 22), and even Gulliver slips about the size of the Lilliputians.

contemporary or slightly later Elizabethan plays there is a popularisation of minuteness.

In Ben Jonson's "Sad Shepherd" Alken speaks of:

> Span-long elves that dance about a pool
> With each a little changeling in their arms.[8]

If they were only nine inches high they could not carry a human baby, or one plausibly to be exchanged for one, but the confusion is itself evidence of the desire to press the diminution. Finally, in Drayton's "Poet's Elysium," we have this:

> Why, by her smallness, you may find
> That she is of the fairy kind.[8]

It became the universally accepted literary idea.

Tickell, the friend of Addison, in his poem "Kensington Gardens," a poem in which, before Sir James Barrie, he peopled that place with fairy denizens, gives the common and by then established English literary idea. The fairy "Milkah" has abducted the human youth Albion, and her reducing of him to fairy size is thus set out:

> For skilful Milkah spar'd not to employ
> Her utmost art to rear the princely boy:
> Each supple limb she swath'd and tender bone,
> And to the elfin standard kept him down.
> She robb'd dwarf elders of their fragrant fruit,
> And fed him early with the daisy's root,
> Whence through his veins the powerful juices ran
> And form'd in beauteous miniature the man.

Oberon, we are told in the same poem, was half an ell in height.

[8] Keightley, II., 145 and 153.

It will not be supposed by anyone familiar with folk-lore that with the establishment of the new notions, the older notions at once completely disappeared.[9]

Shakespeare himself knew of the larger nation, as witness the words of Belarius on first seeing Imogen in the cave:

> But that it eats our victuals, I should think
> Here were a fairy.

Milton speaks of both sizes: of the larger when he describes the attendants at the visionary banquet in "Paradise Regained" as

> Fairer than feigned of old, or fabled since
> Of Faery damsels met in forest wide
> By Knights of Logres or of Lyones
> Lancelot or Pelleas or Pelenore.

and of the smaller at the end of "Paradise Lost," Book I.:

> faery elves
> Whose midnight revels by a forest wide
> Or fountain some belated peasant sees.

---

[9] Keightley (II., p. 113) quotes Bovet's "Pandemonium," p. 207: London, 1684. Bovet is speaking of what some country people had told him of the fairies:

"The place near which they most ordinarily showed themselves was on the side of a hill, named Black-down, between the parishes of Pittminster and Chestonford, not many miles from Tanton. Those that had occasion to travel that way have frequently seen them there, appearing like men and women of a stature generally near the smaller size of men."

To this day "The Irish Fairies, says Mr. Nutt, are by no means necessarily or universally regarded as minute in stature. Two thoroughly competent observers, one Mr. Leland Duncan, working in North Ireland, the other, Mr. Jeremiah Curtin, in South Ireland, agree decisively as to this; fairy and mortal are not thought of as differing in size."

I should add that, in this chapter, I have not been always careful to acknowledge my indebtedness to Keightley, wherever it was minutely due. My last obligation is to paraphrase his conclusions on the use of the word Faërie in English.

He finds it employed successively in four different senses :

(1) As meaning illusion, enchantment.

> The God of her has made an end
> And fro this worldes *faerie*
> Hath taken her into companie.
>
> Gower.

(2) As meaning the land of illusion (an easy transition), as in Lydgate about Arthur :

> He is a king y' crowned in Faerie
> With sceptre and pall.

(3) As meaning the inhabitants of the land of illusion in their collective capacity—the Faery nation :

> Proserpina, and alle hir Faerie,

(4) Lastly, as meaning " the individual denizen of Faery land," and thus applied indifferently " to the full-sized fairy knights and ladies of romance, and to the pygmy elves."

APPENDIX

NOTE A

On the Legend of Good Women

We have several accounts of these tales. At the end of the "Parson's Tale" Chaucer begs pardon for his writings not religious, among others, for the book of the "XXV. Ladies."[1]

Was such a book written by Chaucer in his youth?

In the "Legend of Good Women" there are narratives concerning ten women: Cleopatra, Thisbe, Dido, Hypsipyle, Medea, Lucretia, Ariadne, Philomela, Phyllis and Hypermnestra.

In the Prologue to the Legend, however, there seem to be references to a larger scheme:

> Behind this God of love, up-on this grene
> I saw cominge of ladyës nyntene.[2]

These nineteen plus Cupid's Queen, Alcestis, who is separate from them, would make twenty.

In the Ballade "Hyd Absolon" the names of eighteen women are mentioned: Esther, Penelope, Marcia,

[1] The MSS. correspond in saying XXV. or 25, except the Lansdowne, which says XV., an easy misreading for XXV., and the Harleian, an MS. with numerous variations, which gives XXIX., an unlikely number: so that the consensus for XXV. is very strong.

[2] B Text has "upon the grene," but is otherwise identical.

Iseult, Helen, Lavinia, *Lucretia*, Polixena, *Cleopatra*, *Thisbe*, Hero, *Dido*, Laodamia, *Phyllis*, Canace, *Hypsipyle, Hypermnestra,* and *Ariadne*. Actually, tales are told of eight of these women, and of two others, Medea and Philomela. If, then, we add to the eighteen mentioned in the Ballade, Medea and Philomela and Alcestis, we get twenty-one, but as it is impossible to suppose (for reasons shortly to be given) that Chaucer meant *now* to write of Canace, we have really twenty. So that here the two lists correspond, nineteen unnamed ladies plus Alcestis; and eighteen named ladies minus Canace, plus Medea + Philomela + Alcestis. It would look as if Chaucer's final scheme had been to write of Cleopatra, Thisbe, Dido, Hypsipyle, Medea, Lucretia, Ariadne, Philomela, Phyllis and Hypermnestra, *and* of Esther, Penelope, Marcia, Iseult, Helen, Lavinia, Polixena, Hero, Laodamia and Alcestis—twenty in all.[3]

"The Legend of Good Women" therefore stops half finished, just as "The Canterbury Tales" does.

But still we have not explained what the reference to "The Book of the XXV. Ladies" meant.

In the first book of "The House of Fame," which, whenever written, was certainly written before the

[3] This would correspond with Lydgate's reference: Prologue to the Translation of Boccaccio's "Fall of Princes." See Morris' "Life of Chaucer," Aldine Chaucer, p. 80:

> This poete wrote, at the request of the quene,
> A legend of perfite holynesse,
> Of good women to find out nynetene
> That did excell in bounte and fayrenes.

i.e. Alcestis+19 others.

Prologue to "The Legend of Good Women," which mentions it, Chaucer, after speaking of Dido, mentions some women as betrayed by men. Here he mentions Phyllis, Hypsipyle, Medea, Ariadne, and Briseis, Oenone, and Deianeira, as well as Dido: eight names only, but of those three are new: Briseis, Oenone, and Deianeira.

In the Ballade eighteen were mentioned. Two not mentioned in the Ballade, Medea and Philomela, were written of, and one, Alcestis, mentioned in the A though not in the B version of the Ballade, was clearly to be written of. If we add these three to the eighteen we get twenty-one, and if to these twenty-one we add the three new names, Briseis, Oenone, and Deianeira, furnished by "The House of Fame," we get twenty-four.

In the Prologue to "The Man of Law's Tale" the Man of Law, speaking of Chaucer, says:

> Who-so that wol his large volume seek
> Cleped the Seintes Legende of Cupyde,
> Ther may be seen the large woundes wyde
> Of Lucresse, and of Babilan Tisbee;
> The swerd of Dido for the false Enee;
> The tree of Phillis for hir Demophon;
> The pleinte of Dianire and Hermion,
> Of Adriane and of Isiphilee;
> The bareyne yle stonding in the see;
> The dreynte Leander for his Erro;
> The teres of Eleyne, and eek the wo
> Of Brixseyde, and of thee, Ladomëa;
> The crueltee of thee, queen Medea,
> Thy litel children hanging by the hals
> For thy Jason, that was of love so fals!
> O Ypermistra, Penelopee, Alceste
> Your wyfhood he comendeth with the beste!

In all in this catalogue there are mentioned: Lucretia, Thisbe, Dido, Phyllis, Deianeira, Ariadne, Hypsipyle, Hero, Helen, Briseis, Laodamia, Medea, Hypermnestra, Penelope, Alcestis, and one other nowhere else mentioned—Hermione.

If, therefore, we add Hermione to the twenty-four we get twenty-five.

The various lists give us the following results:

	Now Extant.	Mentioned in the Absolon Ballade.	Said to have been written by Chaucer by The Man of Law.	Names mentioned as of deserted women in the House of Fame. Book I.
(1)	Cleopatra	Cleopatra	—	—
(2)	Thisbe	Thisbe	Thisbe	—
(3)	Dido	Dido	Dido	Dido
(4)	Hypsipyle	Hypsipyle	Hypsipyle	Hypsipyle
(5)	Medea	—	Medea	Medea
(6)	Lucretia	Lucretia	Lucretia	—
(7)	Ariadne	Ariadne	Ariadne	Ariadne
(8)	Philomela	—	—	—
(9)	Phyllis	Phyllis	Phyllis	Phyllis
(10)	Hypermnestra	Hypermnestra	Hpermnestra	—
(11)	—	Alcestis in A version	Alcestis	—
(12)	—	—	Briseis	Briseis
(13)	—	Canace	Canace (denied)	—
(14)	—	—	Deianeira	Deianeira
(15)	—	Esther	—	—
(16)	—	Helen	Helen	—
(17)	—	—	Hermione	—
(18)	—	Hero	Hero	—
(19)	—	Iseult	—	—
(20)	—	Laodamia	Laodamia	—
(21)	—	Lavinia	—	—
(22)	—	Marcia	—	—
(23)	—	—	—	Oenone
(24)	—	Penelope	Penelope	—
(25)	—	Polixena	—	—

Or we can put it in this way. There are ten women treated of in the extant tales. Besides these the Man of Law mentions eight others as having been written about—Alcestis, Briseis, Deianeira, Helen, Hermione, Hero, Laodamia, Penelope. The name of *one* woman, Oenone, not elsewhere mentioned, is mentioned in "The House of Fame," and the names of six others, not elsewhere mentioned, appear in the Absolon Ballade—Esther, Iseult, Lavinia, Marcia, Polixena, and Canace.

I should suppose, therefore, that these XXV. are the XXV. Chaucer speaks of in "The Parson's Tale"; at anyrate, if it is not so, it is an odd coincidence that the lists should supply exactly 25 different names and no more.

One or two difficulties remain.

Did these twenty-five ever exist at one time in any one book?

Of the extant poems, it is odd that the Philomela should appear in no list, and that Cleopatra, the subject of another extant poem, should be mentioned only in the Ballade in the Prologue. These facts, by themselves, are consistent with these poems being written for the first time in our editions. Both poems are perfunctory.

Lastly, there is the question of Canace.

A tale on this subject is necessary to make up the twenty-five, but Chaucer makes the Man of Law expressly state that Chaucer *does* not write on that subject. The quotation is a continuation without interval of the words already quoted from "The Man of Law":

But certeinly no word ne wryteth he
Of thilke wikke ensample of Canacee,
That lovede hir owne brother sinfully;
Of swiche cursed stories I sey "fy";
Or elles of Tyro Apollonius,
How that the cursed King Antiochus
Birafte his doghter of hir maydenhede,
That is so horrible a tale for to rede,
Whan he hir threw up-on the pavement.
And therfor he, of ful avysement,
Nolde never wryte in none of his sermouns
Of swiche unkinde abhominaciouns,
Ne I wol noon reherse, if that I may.

As Gower had written of both subjects, it has been suggested that here the poet has gone out of his own way to censure Gower. But this suggestion has been criticised, and with apparent justice, as inconsistent not only with Chaucer's character but with the dedication to the moral Gower at the end of "Troilus and Cressida."

Is it possible that Chaucer was here disclaiming a youthful indiscretion? If so, while the falsehood is unusually unblushing, the manner is not wholly inconsistent with a "political lie." Chaucer does not tell the "lie" himself, the Man of Law tells it for him; he says that Chaucer does not write, not that he has never written, and later, speaking of two subjects, on one of which we do not suppose him to have written, that he "of ful avysement"[4] (possibly, though it may carry

[4] "Of ful avysement" is a curious phrase. It *may* mean having been *always* of firm mind in his determination to eschew such subjects. On the other hand, it *may* mean would never on his considered judgment put forth such stories.

another meaning, a periphrasis for "of his considered judgment") would never write on such subjects.

Of this evidence the reader can form his own opinion, but, taking it all together, there is at least something approaching proof that Chaucer had written many other stories of "Good Women" before he turned his completing attention to those we now have.

NOTE B

Spenser's Similes

Spenser is not always equally happy with his similes. In Book I. (Canto II., verse 16) there is too good a one, the fight between the two Rams being much more real than the combat it is designed to illustrate, between the Knight and the Saracen. A better comparison (Book I., Canto VI., verse 44) is that afforded by the fight between two boars, no every-day occurrence, and yet no more out of the way than the Saracen's fight with Satyrane. In Book I., Canto V., verse 8, the unreal combatants are compared to things more unreal still—a dragon and a gryfon. This is paralleled in Book II. (Canto V., verse 10), where Guyon and Pyrochles are compared to a lion and a unicorn. Not much more happy is the naval comparison in Book IV. (Canto II., verse 16), where the fight between Blandamour and Paridell is likened to one between two brigandines; and a happy unhappy simile is that where the good but fanciful water-fight between Artegall and Pollente

(V., 2, 15) is compared to one between a dolphin and a seal.

In Book I., Canto III., verse 31, there is a very inserted simile. The resemblance is merely general, and the tone of Una on the supposed recovery of her knight, and that of the mariner's "chearefull whistle" are very different. It should be said, however, that Spenser does not often drag in a simile that is not suggested by the flow of imagination started by the context. These lapses are occasional only, so consonant is the poem. However, to mention one, when Florimell has been attacked by the boatman and then is assailed by Proteus (III., 8, 33), it is a mere turning aside to speak, as carefully as Spenser does, of the bird that, seeking cover from the hawk, falls a prey to the "hungry spaniels." A worse instance is when Britomart, divided between jealousy and love, is compared to a froward child (Book V., Canto VI., verse 14):

> Like as a wayward childe, whose sounder sleepe
> Is broken with some fearefull dreames affright,
> With froward will doth set him selfe to weepe;
> Ne can be stild for all his nurses might,
> But kicks and squals, and shriekes for fell despight:
> Now scratching her, and her loose locks misusing;
> Now seeking darkenesse, and now seeking light;
> Then crauing sucke, and then the sucke refusing.

The picture is as inappropriate as it is lively, and more cannot be said.

The sizes in the description of the dragon-fight are not consonant. The tail is half a mile long, and yet can be cut through at one blow. A tail half a mile

long, if in proportion to those of lizards or crocodiles, would be some fifty yards thick. The dragon's wings are compared to great sails, but a beast a mile long would need sails beyond Elizabethan imaginings. When the dragon lifts the knight and horse their struggles compel him to let go. The contest in mid-air, says Spenser, was like one between a hawk and a fowl. In fact, if the dragon was a mile long, it would have been like a struggle between hawk and house-fly.[1]

On the other hand, Spenser's comparisons for Overthrow are always impressive and unforced. In Book I. (Canto VIII., verses 22 and 23) Orgoglio's fall is likened first to that of an aged tree

> High growing on the top of rocky clift,

which the woodman had almost cut through; and secondly, to the overthrow of a high castle when undermining had sapped its foundations.

In Book III., Canto IV., verse 17, Marinell's fall is thus described:

> Like as the sacred Oxe, that carelesse stands,
> With gilden hornes, and flowry girlonds crownd,
> Proud of his dying honor and deare bands,
> Whiles th' altars fume with frankincense arownd,
> All suddenly with mortall stroke astownd,

[1] Apart from these discrepancies, and they are perhaps not noticed in rapid reading, the dragon-fight is one of the best in "The Faerie Queene," some vrai-semblance being preserved by the miraculous aid afforded the Knight by the Well and Tree of Life.

The Dragon itself is described on the scale of Gustave Dore in verses 9, 10, and 11 (Book I., Canto XI.).

Doth grouelling fall, and with his streaming gore
Distaines the pillours, and the holy grownd,
And the fair flowres, that decked him afore;
So fell proud *Marinell* vpon the pretious shore.

a simile at once impressive, natural, and unobvious.

Similarly unforced is the likening of the swaying and dazed Priamond, when Cambelloe's spear has done its worst, to a tree no longer storm-worthy:

With that his poynant speare he fierce auentred,
With doubled force close vnderneath his shield,
That through the mayles into his thigh it entred,
And there arresting, readie way did yield,
For bloud to gush forth on the grassie field;
That he for paine himselfe n'ote right vpreare,
But too and fro in great amazement reel'd,
Like an old Oke whose pith and sap is seare,
At puffe of euery storme doth stagger here and theare.[2]

As to Spenser's similes from observation, they present us always with pictures beautifully real.[3] Sometimes they elucidate what they are designed to illustrate, as the simile in Book II., Canto III., verse 36, describing

[2] Book IV., Canto III., verse 9.

[3] They are very often from hawking; Spenser, as was natural, turning for illustration to fighting birds. Calepine, without his armour and thus able to run lightly, is compared to a hawk released from her jesses. Book VI., Canto IV., verse 19.

And when, in Book V., Canto II., verse 54, Talus puts the multitudes that had admired the giant to flight, he is compared to a falcon and the fugitives making for safety to ducks:

As when a Faulcon hath with nimble flight
Flowne at a flush of Ducks, foreby the brooke,
The trembling foule dismayd with dreadfull sight
Of death, the which them almost ouertooke,
Doe hide themselves from her astonying looke,
Amongst the flags and couert round about.

the crouching Braggadocchio's relief when, discovering he is not in danger, he ventures forth vaunting himself:

> As fearefull fowle, that long in secret caue
> For dread of soaring hauke her selfe hath hid,
> Not caring how, her silly life to saue,
> She her gay painted plumes disorderid,
> Seeing at last her selfe from daunger rid,
> Peepes foorth, and soone renewes her natiue pride;
> She gins her feathers foule disfigured
> Proudly to prune, and set on euery side,
> So shakes off shame, ne thinks how erst she did her hide.

But more generally, the picture presented by the simile from observation is, for one reason or another, so much more attention-arresting, or so much grander, than the fancied event to which it is likened that one loses sight of the thing illustrated in admiration of the illustration.[4] This is not always so, but it *is* generally so.

Thus in Book III., Canto VII., when Spenser has been describing the tussle between Satyrane and the Beast, and, in illustration, offers verse 34:

> As he that striues to stop a suddein flood,
> And in strong banckes his violence enclose,
> Forceth it swell aboue his wonted mood,
> And largely ouerflow the fruitfull plaine,
> That all the countrey seemes to be a Maine,
> And the rich furrowes flote, all quite fordonne:
> The wofull husbandman doth lowd complaine,
> To see his whole yeares labour lost so soone,
> For which to God he made so many an idle boone.

the picture is too impressive.

[4] For other instances of good illustration from Nature, besides the Braggadocchio one here quoted, see Book III., Canto VII., verse 39; and generally Chapter V. of this volume.

Similarly when we read verse 42 of Book IV., Canto I., illustrating the combat between Scudamour and Paridell:

> As when two billowes in the Irish sowndes,
> Forcibly driuen with contrarie tydes
> Do meete together, each abacke rebowndes
> With roaring rage; and dashing on all sides,
> That filleth all the sea with fome, diuydes
> The doubtfull current into diuers wayes:
> So fell those two in spight of both their prydes.

our minds are filled with an image much too big for the particular occasion. Such poetry we would not forego, and, indeed, it is of great service to the reader as affording a momentary relief from fancy, and enabling him to the following fancies to give again a refreshed attention; but it does destroy such illusion of reality as the run of the narrative has succeeded in imparting to the adventures. And this is markedly evident where the events, episodic to the main story, are so obviously mere romantic fabling that one reads of them without real interest at all. Thus in Book VI., Canto VII. (the episode of Arthur's adventures with Sir Turpine, Sir Enias, etc.), Arthur is set on by two knights: the first, Sir Enias, misses his thrust and charges idly by; the second, more unfortunate, comes full against Arthur's lance, which pierces him through and through. It is all told in two verses amazingly quickly; the unfortunate knight charges and is dead in verse 8; and then in verse 9 Spenser continues:

> As when a cast of Faulcons make their flight
> At an Herneshaw, that lyes aloft on wing,

> The whyles they strike at him with heedlesse might,
> The warie foule his bill doth backward wring;
> On which the first, whose force her first doth bring,
> Her selfe quite through the bodie doth engore,
> And falleth downe to ground like senselesse thing,
> But th' other not so swift, as she before,
> Fayles of her souse, and passing by doth hurt no more.

One wakes up to find oneself on the moor; and though one may now be sceptical about what once was universally believed about the heron's use of his bill, one has at anyrate often seen him, as the river emerges to the broader levels, lying aloft on wing.

Perhaps the most glaring instance of this habit is one of the most famous verses in "The Faerie Queene."[5] Britomart, disguised as a knight, is riding with Redcross, and, anxious to hear about Artegall, induces her companion to speak of her hero. The report is wholly laudatory, and Britomart is delighted to hear "her Loue so highly magnifide," whereupon Spenser:

> The louing mother, that nine monethes did beare,
> In the deare closet of her painefull side,
> Her tender babe, it seeing safe appeare,
> Doth not so much reioyce, as she reioyced theare.

One knows not what to say of such writing. On the one side, the most sacred issues of life, and poetry of an "indefinable beauty"; on the other, altogether lacking a sense of the apropos.

Yet whether the poem finally suffers from these too good and too real similes is a question not admitting of

[5] Book III., Canto II., verse 11.

an entirely simple answer. Considered as one piece, as an architectural whole, undoubtedly it does: these clear-eyed glimpses of reality, incontestable tributes to Spenser's powers of observation, do undoubtedly destroy the romantic illusion. Yet who would complain! If the effect of "The Faerie Queene" were that of a mere romance we should not read it. It is not merely a dream, it is a dream about our life, and it helps us to remember this, that the poet himself sometimes—and pointedly—forgets that he is dreaming.

NOTE C

Spenser's Pictures of Soft Peace

It is pleasant to collect some passages, among the most beautiful in all poetry, by the influence of which Spenser rests his reader's mind and soothes eyes tired with the whirl of adventurous happenings. The number of such passages is not great compared with the bulk of the poem, but the impression they leave on the hastiest reader is ineffaceable. Nowhere is Spenser so emphatically Spenser, so different from every other. The peculiarity of their beauty, as of "a still and calmy bay," differentiates them from the many attempts at imitation made by his many pupils. It will have been observed, in the chapter on Spenserian imitations, that the successful passages in imitation were generally not of this character. Phineas Fletcher no doubt has pictures calm and still, but the quality of his stillness

is not Spenser's. One cannot imitate, except by the merest copying, the idiosyncrasy of the greatest poets. As well try to write lines like :

> In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
> A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
> The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead
> Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets,

with their fluency of precise and rich image, as to reproduce the quiet of the lines describing the sadness of the bewitched trees :

> Long time they thus together traueiled,
> Till weary of their way, they came at last,
> Where grew two goodly trees, that faire did spred
> Their armes abroad, with gray mosse ouercast,
> And their greene leaues trembling with euery blast,
> Made a calme shadow far in compasse round :
> The fearefull Shepheard often there aghast
> Vnder them neuer sat.[1]

To notice some passages in detail. Very welcome is the *irruption* (after the tournament with Sansjoy) of the curing of Redcross in the palace of Lucifera :

> In wine and oyle they wash his woundes wide,
> And softly can embalme on euery side.
> And all the while, most heauenly melody
> About the bed sweet musicke did divide.[2]

In the third verse of Canto VII., the canto in which is the combat with Orgoglio, Duessa finds Redcross :

> whereas he wearie sate,
> To rest him selfe, foreby a fountaine side
> Disarmed all of yron-coted Plate,
> And by his side his steed the grassy forage ate.

[1] I., Canto II., v. 28.

[2] Book I., Canto V., verse 17.

He feedes vpon the cooling shade, and bayes
His sweatie forehead in the breathing wind,
Which through the trembling leaues full gently playes
Wherein the cherefull birds of sundry kind
Do chaunt sweet musick.

And in verse 24 of the first canto of Book II., just before the sudden onrush of the deceived Guyon, he is found in a similar situation:

Betwixt two hils, whose high heads ouerplast,
The valley did with coole shade ouercast,
Through midst thereof a little riuer rold,
By which there sate a knight with helme vnlast,
Himselfe refreshing with the liquid cold.

In Canto IV. of the same book Phaon's tale contains a lovely verse, descriptive of a smooth and easy wooing:

At last such grace I found, and meanes I wrought,
That I that Ladie to my spouse had wonne;
Accord of friends, consent of parents sought,
Affiance made, my happinesse begonne,
There wanted nought but few rites to be donne,
Which marriage make.[3]

In Canto V. the absent Cymochles is soothed in the Bower of Bliss by sounds similar to those heard in the first book by the inmates of Morpheus' cave:

And fast beside, there trickled softly downe
A gentle streame, whose murmuring waue did play
Emongst the pumy stones,[4] and made a sowne,
To lull him soft a sleepe, that by it lay.[5]

[3] Verse 21.

[4] Pumy stones = pumice stones.

[5] Verse 30.

An air of indolence hangs over the whole of Canto VI., occupied with the Idle Lake, and the lay that charms the sense may have remained in Tennyson's mind when he wrote the "Lotos-Eaters":

> Behold, O man, that toilesome paines doest take,
> The flowres, the fields, and all that pleasant growes,
> How they themselves doe thine ensample make,
> Whiles nothing enuious nature them forth throwes
> Out of her fruitfull lap; how, no man knowes,
> They spring, they bud, they blossome fresh and faire,
> And deck the world with their rich pompous showes;
> Yet no man for them taketh paines or care.[6]

The effortless movement of the verse images the happening of growth.

Equally skilfully is the impression of a dead rest produced in Canto XII. by a turn in the sentence:

> And now they nigh approched to the sted,
> Where as those Mermayds dwelt: it was a still
> And calmy bay, on th' one side sheltered
> With the brode shadow of an hoarie hill.[7]

In Book III., Canto V., verse 39, there is the little river with the "pumy stones," beside which was the fair pavilion where Timias was brought sore wounded after his combat with the foresters:

[6] Verse 15. Cf. Tennyson, "Lotos Eaters," verse 3.

> Lo! in the middle of the wood
> The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
> With winds upon the branch, and there
> Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
> Sun-steep'd at noon.

[7] Verse 30.

. a pleasant glade,
With mountaines round about enuironed,
And mighty woods, which did the valley shade,
And like a stately Theatre it made,
Spreading it selfe into a spatious plaine.
And in the midst a little riuer plaide
Emongst the pumy stones, which seemed to plaine
With gentle murmure, that his course they did restraine.

And in Book IV., Canto XI., after the account of the famous rivers and the reference the Amazon suggests to the Warlike Women, there is the music of Arion, to hear which 'all the raging seas for ioy forgot to rore.'

Then was there heard a most celestiall sound,
Of dainty musicke, which did next ensew
Before the spouse.[8]

Other passages, and especially those in the sixth book dealing with the home of Pastorella, have been noticed in the text.

NOTE D

On the Uses of Archaic Language

It must occasionally have occurred to anyone in the habit of reading old authors—Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, or Dunbar—that some part of the poetical attraction is due to the use of archaic language.

To speak first of Chaucer, his language is half modern, and, though easily read, sounds often to a

[8] Verse 23.

reader as if he was trying ingenuously to speak our speech, literally lisping in numbers :

> This abbot, which that was an holy man,
> As monkes been, or elles oghten be.

No doubt part of the turn here is Chaucer's, and it is easy to write Middle-English without giving this delight. Nevertheless, it is practically impossible to translate the lines into Modern English so as to preserve it. Wordsworth hardly changes at all :

> This Abbot, for he was a holy man
> As all monks are, or surely ought to be,

and entirely loses it. And if we attempt to be more exactly literal :

> This Abbot priest who was a holy man
> As all monks be, or else ought so to be,

we land ourselves in an affectation of simplicity which is not in the original.

How much of its charm the ramble of Chaucer's narrative owes to this old fashionedness it is of course impossible to determine. One feels it dimly in the most immemorable passages :

> Yis, sir, quod he, yis, Hoost, so moot I go,
> But I be myrie, y-wis I wol be blamed.
> And right anon his tale he hath attamed,
> And thus he seyde unto us everichon,
> This sweete preest, this goodly man, Sir John.

which is pleasant reading, and yet without the old fashion there would be nothing to catch the palate.

In other passages, dependent for their main effect on their matter, and where the writing is plainly great, one

can sometimes still perceive that an additional effectiveness is got from the old turn of the phrase. There is the account of the death of Nero:

> And in this gardin fond he cherles tweye
> That seten by a fyr, ful gret and reed;
> And to thise cherles two he gan to preye
> To sleen him and to girden of his heed,
> That to his body, whan that he were deed,
> Were no despyt y-doon, for his defame.
> Him-self he slow, he coude no better reed,
> Of which fortune lough, and hadde a game.

This owes its effect doubtless to very substantial literary qualities,—sympathy, imagination, a faculty for contrast. Shortly, we are as greatly struck as we are, because there is put in opposition the sympathetically appreciated pitifulness of Nero's extremity and the vivid contempt of judging Fate, an opposition which, before it could be as sharply apprehended, called for the exercise of the imagination. Nevertheless the last phrase—modernly—"at which Fortune laughed out in mocking derision," gains in effect from the archaic "hadde a game." Very possibly with Chaucer's public the line would read much more ordinarily. To us there is a suggestion of belittlement in the words that is at the craftiest summit of ironic laughter.

There is a line in Spenser, if the instance is not too trifling, that illustrates very curiously the attention-arresting power of a word when even the least degree unfamiliar. In the long and very ordinary series of sonnets dedicatory of "The Faerie Queene" there is only one that attaches at all to the memory. It is the

last, the sonnet addressed "To all the gratious and beautifull ladies in the Court," and founded on the common story told of Apelles and many others. It was necessary, says Spenser, that when he was drawing the portrait of his Faery Queen he should have these ladies in remembrance, just as it was necessary for the old painter to compound his Venus from the several beauties of many maids.

> The Chian Peincter when he was requirde
> To pourtraict Venus in her perfect hew.

Had Spenser, without particularising the birthplace, contented himself with writing *Grecian* there would have been little in the sonnet more memorable than in the rest. And this happens without the least confusion in the sense, just because the word in Spenser comes oddly in its place. The same syllables, for the reader of translations from the Greek Anthology, would not secure, of their own virtue, any portion of this effect.

Similarly and more markedly, the suggestion in Milton's

> or where Chineses drive
> With sails and wind their cany waggons light,

of a strange people using strange vehicles in a strange way, and therefore increasing the idea of remoteness, which the poet in the whole passage seeks to convey, is largely dependent upon words unfamiliar but in no danger of being misunderstood. To write

> or where the Chinese drive
> With sails and wind, their sledges of light cane,

is to part with half of what Milton's line now gives us.

The Chinese practise an ascertained civilisation on an ascertained part of the earth's surface. Chineses may live at the edge of nowhere and act anyhow.

A very simple and very famous simile of Giles Fletcher's furnishes an instance of the advantageous use for romance purposes of a word altogether strange. The vain globe of the Sorceress, so soon to be shattered, is compared to a soap-bubble :

> Such watry *orbicles* young boys do blowe
> Out of their sopy shels, and much admire
> The swimming world, which tenderly they rowe
> With easie breath, till it be waued higher :
> But if by chance but roughly once aspire,
> The painted bubble instantly doth fall.

An instance still more famous is Shakespeare's :

> his two chamberlains
> Will I with wine and wassail so convince,
> That memory, the warder of the brain,
> Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
> A limbec only.

The most uninitiated reader knows that limbec has a precise meaning. The initiated knows what it is, but however initiated the reader and however much he may rejoice in the precision of Shakespeare's physiological knowledge, there is still for him a further pleasure in the forgotten word. How much should we lose if he had said

> and the receipt of reason
> Receive fumes only.

The dim old word helps to intensify our realisation of the mystery of the brain. " Limbec " is at once strange

and accurate, and we have a definite process described without forfeiting our sense of awe.

We may say then that in reading language now become archaic, we catch something of the impressiveness that always belongs to the unknown, without losing hold of the satisfaction which attaches to precision of speech. It may be also perhaps that the very incompleteness of our knowledge sets the imagination roving and, in Coleridge's phrase, produces "a strong working of the brain."

INDEX.

A. B. C., 24.
Abbay Walk, 138.
Abuse of Travelling, On the, 290.
Addison, 96, 267, 277.
Advancement of Learning, 251 (*n*).
Akenside, 283.
Alchemist, 112.
Alchemy, 12, 111.
Allegory, 174, 191, 199, 203, 213, 215, 222, 230, 265.
"*Alone Walking*," 120.
Amoretti, 142, 250.
Ancient Mariner, 109 (*n*).
"Antique World," Spenser and, 189.
Apocrypha, Chaucerian, 117 *seq.*
Archimage, 283.
Ariosto, 212, 271.
Art, Spenser's, 149.
Astrology, 12.
Astrophel, 244.
Atalanta in Calydon, 135.
Anti-Thelypthora, 97.

Bacon, 251 (*n*).
Bailey, J., 141.
Bathos in Spenser, 225.
Beattie, 296.
Beaumont, J., 312.
Beauty, Spenser and, 142, 177 (*n*), 202, 203, 231, 241, 256.
Beggar's Petition, 121 (*n*).
Bellay, J. du, 153, 154, 155.
Beryn, History of, 121 (*n*).
Bible, Spenser and, 228.
Blake, 84, 85.
Blanche of Lancaster, 25, 27.
Boccaccio, 50, 52, 82, 98.
Boethius, 13, 62, 72 (*n*).
Book of the Duchesse, 16, 24 *seq.*, 30, 45, 119, 124, 176.
Bradwardine, 62.
Bridges, R., 220.
Britain's Ida, 121 (*n*).
Britannia's Pastorals, 315.
Brontë, C., 265.
Browne, W., 315.
Bunyan, 191.
Burns, 20, 120, 252.
Burton, 336 (*n*).
Butterfly and Spider, 178 *seq.*
Byron, 298.

Cambridge, R. O., 283.
Campbell, T., 242.
Canon's Yeoman's Tale, 111 *seq.*
Canterbury Tales, 20, 22, 30, 81 *seq.*, 88 *seq.*, 119, 121 (*n*).
Castle of Indolence, 293 *seq.*
Catullus, 254.
Celtic Heathendom, 324 (*n*).
Chambers, E. K., 324 (*n*).
Change, Spenser and, 210, 261.
Character-drawing, Chaucer's, 90, 91.

Chatterton, 132, 299.
Chaucer, absence of discomfort in, 20.
Chaucer's England, 4 (*n*).
Chaucer and Spenser, see Spenser.
Christ's Victorie and Triumph, 289 (*n*), 303, 309, 333 (*n*).
Church, Chaucer and the, 88, 111. See *Religion*.
Church, Dean, 145, 148, 149.
Clanvowe, 122.
Classes, mixture of, in Chaucer's England, 3.
Classical allusions, Chaucer's, 11, 25.
Clerk's Tale, 33, 185.
Clorinda, The Dolefull Lay of, 246.
Coleridge, 109, 126, 362.
Colin Clout's Come Home Again, 244, 248.
Comedy, Chaucer's, 95.
Compleynt of Anelida and Arcyte, 29, 140 (*n*).
Complaint of the Black Knight, 122.
Compleint to his Lady, 29.
Compleynt of Mars, 28.
Compleynte unto Pite, 24, 140 (*n*).
Compleynt of Venus, 28 (*n*).
Complaints, Spenser's, 143, 150.
Cock and the Fox, 127.
Contemplation, 211 (*n*).
Convention, Chaucer and, 50 (*n*).
Coulton, 4, 5.
Court life, Chaucer's, 19.
Spenser's, 151, 158.
Court of Love, 123.
Courtly Poetry, Chaucer and, 22.
Crane, W., 206.
Crofton, Croker, 323 (*n*), 328, 335 (*n*), 336 (*n*).
Cuckoo and the Nightingale, 122, 131.
Culture of Chaucer's England, 3.
Cupid, God of Love, The Book of, 122.

Daphnaida, 174 *seq.*, 245.
Dares Phrygius, 66.
Defence of Guenevere, 133.
Defoe, 36.
Diplomatic service, Chaucer in, 19.
Divine and Moral Songs, 121 (*n*).
Doctor's Tale, 109 *seq.*
Domestic quality, Chaucer's, 110.
Dorothy, St., 133.
Dramatic, in Chaucer, 82, 83, 91.
in Spenser, 164, 213, 227.
Drayton, 337.
Dreames, 165.
Drummond, 317.
Dryden, 1, 83, 127 *seq.*, 162 (*n*), 169, 267, 277, 330 (*n*).
Dunbar, 139, 185.
" Dutch painting " in Chaucer, 89, 98.

E. K., 157.
Earthly Paradise, 78.
Editions of Spenser, 266.
Education, Canto on, 291.
Eighteenth century criticism of Chaucer, 96.
of Spenser, 266 *seq.*
Ellis, F. S., 12, 57 (*n*).
Endymion, 79 (*n*), 165 (*n*), 169.
England in Chaucer's time, 2.
Epic unity in Spenser, 275.
Epithalamion, 250, 252.
Epithalamium, 288.
Epitre au dieu d'amour, 10.
Eros and Psyche, 220.

Experiences, Chaucer's varied, 19.

Fables, Dryden's, 127.
Henryson's, 138.
Faerie Queene, 45 (*n*), 141, 144, 161, 180 *seq.*
Faeries, Spenser's, 320 *seq.*
Fairfax, E., 135, 268, 301 *seq.*
Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland, 328.
Fairy Mythology, 325.
Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare, 326.
Fées du moyen âge, 324 (*n*).
Fielding, 99.
Fitzgerald, E., 202 (*n*).
Fletcher, G., 289 (*n*), 303, 309, 333 (*n*), 361.
Fletcher, P., 42 (*n*), 135, 142 (*n*), 303, 353.
Flower and the Leaf, 125, 131.
Former Age, 11, 115 (*n*).
Fortune, 115 (*n*).
Franklin's Tale, 104 *seq.*, 205 (*n*).
Freedom of scheme in *Canterbury Tales*, 83.
Friar's Tale, 56 (*n*).

Gamelyn, Tale of, 121.
Gareth and Lynette, 183 (*n*).
Garmond of Gude Ladeis, 138.
Gay, 106 (*n*).
Gentilesse, 115 (*n*).
Gentle birth, Chaucer and, 20.
Geoffrey of Monmouth, 199.
Gerald the Welshman, 334.
Gervase of Tilbury, 334.
Giraldus Cambrensis, 334 (*n*).
Go forth, King, 122.
Goblin Market, 200.
Goethe, 256.
Golden Legend, 133.
Golden Targe, 140 (*n*).
Gorges, A., 175, 245.
Gower, 339.
Gray, 163.
Greek myth in Spenser, 228.
Grey, Lord, 143, 151, 222.
Grimm, The Brothers, 328.
Grindal, Archbishop, 149, 156, 159.
Gulliver's Travels, 114.
Guy of Warwick, 194 (*n*).

Happy Warrior, 172.
Harvey, G., 143, 151 *seq.*
Hazlitt, 27 (*n*), 32 (*n*), 62, 100.
Henry IV., 95.
Henryson, 135, 137 *seq.*
Holinshed, 329.
House of Fame, 12, 23, 37 *seq.*, 70, 136.
Howard, D., 175.
Hughes, 266, 268.
Humour, Chaucer's, 86, 95, 98, 102.
Hunt, Leigh, 169 (*n*).
Hurd, R., 272 *seq.*
Hymns, The Foure, 256 *seq.*
Hymn to May, 287.
Hypocrisy in Chaucer, 112.
Imitations of Chaucer, 121 *seq.*
of Spenser, 280 *seq.*
Immaturity, absence of, in Chaucer, 30.
Indian Emperor, 162 (*n*).
Intelligibility of Chaucer, 1.
Invention, mediaeval delight in, 48.
Ireland, 141, 143.
Irish poetry, Spenser and, 146.
Italianism, Spenser's protest against, 216.

James I., 135 *seq.*
Jerusalem, 238, 268, 323.
Johnson, S., 96, 285.
Jonson, B., 112, 337.

Keats, 79 (*n*), 126, 127, 165 (*n*), 169, 202, 298.

Keightley, 325, 329, 333, 336 (*n*), 338 (*n*).
Ker, W. P., 204.
King John, 172 (*n*).
Kingis Quair, 135 *seq.*, 140 (*n*).
Knight's Tale, 102 *seq.*

Lak of Stedfastnesse, 115 (*n*).
Launcelot, 34, 51.
Language of Chaucer, 1, 357 *seq.*
of Spenser, 357 *seq.*
Leech-Gatherer, 123, 176.
Legend of Good Women, 3 (*n*), 13, 22, 23, 37 (*n*),71 *seq.*, 102, 340 *seq.*
Legouis, 2, 91 (*n*).
Leicester, Lord, 143, 150, 164, 165.
Lengthiness of Spenser, 155, 176.
Life, Chaucer's, 1 *seq.*, 13 *seq.*
Spenser's, 142 *seq.*
Life of St. Cecilia, 30 *seq.*
Limited appeal of Spenser, 265, 318.
Linian, 92.
Longfellow, 37.
Lorris, G. de, 8, 9, 117, 120.
Love, Spenser and, 240, 247, 249, 252.
Lowes, J. L., 70 (*n*).
Lydgate, 96 (*n*), 108 (*n*), 122, 339, 341 (*n*).

Mabinogion, 323 (*n*).
Macbeth, 109 (*n*).
MacCallum, 76 (*n*).
Machinery of mediaeval poetry, 13.
Malory, T., 271.
Man of Law's Tale, 31.
Mantuan, 156.
Marot, C., 156, 161.
Maury, L. F. A., 324 (*n*).
Mendez, M., 284.
Merchant's Tale, 74 (*n*), 320.
Merchant's Second Tale, 121 (*n*)
Meredith, G., 72, 101.
Metre, Chaucer's, 30 (*n*).
Spenser's, 152, 271.
Meun, J. C. dit de, 9, 13, 20.
Michael, 107.
Midsummer Night's Dream, 320, 335.
Miller's Tale, 97.
Millet, 35.
Milton, 109, 153 (*n*), 185, 210, 266, 338, 360.
Minstrel, 296, *seq.*
Modern poetry, Chaucer and, 318.
Spenser and, 318.
Monk's Tale, 35.
Morality, Chaucer's, 4 *seq.*, 49, 68, 86, 98, 99, 110.
Spenser's, 205, 213, 214, 240, 261, 262 *seq.*
Morals in mediaeval England, 4.
Morley, H., 123, 156 (*n*), 162, 165, 199 (*n*).
Morris, Dr., 81 (*n*).
W., 46, 78, 133, 202.
Mortality, Spenser and, 243.
Mother Hubberd's Tale, 150, 168 *seq.*, 196 (*n*), 247, 290.
Mourning Muse of Thestylis, 245.
Much Ado about Nothing, 196, 235 (*n*).
Muiopotmos, 150, 178 *seq.*
Music of Spenser, 154, 160, 177 (*n*), 185, 201, 202, 253. See also *Sound*.
Mutabilitie, Cantos of, 72 (*n*), 180, 241 *seq.*

Nativity, 286, 288 *seq.*
Natural history, Spenser's, 155, 197.
Naturalness of Chaucer, 55, 93, 96, 97, 103, 104; see *Realism*.

Nature, Spenser and, 181, 197, 198.
Noodt, J. v. d., 153.
Nun's Priest's Tale, 12, 101, 107, 114 *seq.*, 136, 138.
Nutt, A., 326 *seq.*, 333, 338 (*n*).

Observation, Chaucer's, 22, 23, 100.
Observations on the Fairy Queen of Spenser, 108 (*n*).
Order of Chaucer's poems, 23.
Ovid, 13, 25.

Pardoner and Tapster, Merry Adventures of, 121 (*n*).
Pardoner's Tale, 112 *seq.*
Parlement of Foules, 23, 44 *seq.*, 181 (*n*), 242.
Parodies of Spenser, 280 *seq.*
Parson's Tale, 81 (*n*), 340, 344.
Pastoral Aeglogues on Sir Phllip Sidney, 245.
Pathos in Chaucer, 66, 107.
Pearch, 284 (*n*).
Peele, 194 (*n*).
Pembroke, Lady, 166.
Percy, 279.
Petit Pont, A. du, 5.
Petrarch, 92, 153.
Peveril of the Peak, 97.
Phoenix Nest, 245.
Pictorial quality of Chaucer, 65.
of Spenser, 164, 181, 184, 190 (*n*), 197, 198, 200, 202, 206, 207, 210, 217, 218, 220, 223, 229, 234, 241, 242, 349.
Pisan, C. de, 10.
Piscatorie Eclogues, 308.
Poetic emphasis, mediaeval habit of, 33.
Poetry, Spenser and, 160, 166.
Poets of Beauty, 141.
Political life, Spenser's, 141, 144, 146, 151, 223, 229, 231.
Political tone of Chaucer, 20.
Pollard, 106.
Pope, 41, 44, 97, 130, 169, 282.
Praise of Chastity, 194 (*n*).
Prioress's Tale, 101, 106 *seq.*, 131.
"Process," Meredith's, 72.
Progress of Poesy, 163.
Prologue, 1, 11, 86 *seq.*
Prologue, Second, 121 (*n*).
Prothalamion, 142, 254.
Psyche (Beaumont's), 312.
Psyche (Ridley's), 293 (*n*).
Purple Island, 42 (*n*), 142 (*n*), 303, 304.

Quietness in Spenser, 187, 188, 201, 238, 353 *seq.*

Raleigh, 144, 244.
Realism, Chaucer's, 13, 51, 57 58, 60, 62, 69, 86, 93, 95, 101, 102; see *Naturalness*.
Reality, Spenser and, 142, 148, 169, 192, 230, 265, 351, 353.
Religion, Chaucer and, 11.
Spenser and, 149, 151, 156, 159, 160, 171, 183, 185, 211, 256, 257, 260, 261 *seq.*
Returne from Parnassus, 154(*n*).
Rhys, E., 324 (*n*).
Ridley, G., 293 (*n*).
Robene and Makyne, 138.
Romance, Chaucer's, 101, 102.
Spenser's, 181, 183, 188, 207, 212, 215, 222, 227, 230, 234, 235, 237, 271.
Romance of the Rose, 8 *seq.*, 22, 57 (*n*), 73 (*n*), 77 (*n*), 89 (*n*), 91 (*n*), 117 *seq.*, 120, 136, 293 (*n*).
Romances, 6.
Romantic Revival, Spenser and, 279, 299, 318.
Romeo and Juliet, 335.
Rosamond, 115 (*n*).
Rossetti, C. G., 200.
Rossetti, D. G., 202.
Rowley Poems, 132, 299.

Rubens, 242.
Ruines of Rome, 154.
Ruines of Time, 150, 161 (*n*), 165 *seq.*, 169.

Sage Enamoured, 101.
Satire, Chaucer's, 87, 88.
Spenser's, 169, 218.
Schoolmistress, 280.
Scott, 20, 97, 158 (*n*), 166 (*n*), 173.
Seasons, 96.
Self-Tormentor, 101.
Shakespeare, 21, 52, 66, 67 (*n*), 69, 95, 97, 100, 101, 109, 120, 157 (*n*), 172 (*n*), 193 (*n*), 217 (*n*), 251, 252, 257, 265, 320, 327, 333, 338, 361.
Shakespeare's Roman Plays and their Background, 76 (*n*).
Shelley, 298.
Shenstone, 280 *seq.*
Shepheardes Calender, 143, 156 *seq.*, 168.
Shepherd's Pipe, 315 (*n*).
Shirley, 122.
Sidney, 143, 150, 165, 167, 245.
Similes, Spenser's, 182, 206, 217, 221, 346 *seq.*
Simplicity, Chaucer's, 28, 131.
Sir Thopas, 108, 146, 330 (*n*).
Skeat, W. W., 2, 74 (*n*), 120, 122, 125, 126.
Skelton, 156 (*n*).
Slips, Spenser's, 221, 229, 240 (*n*).
Social position, Chaucer's, 17, 19.
Sound, Spenser and. See *Music*.
Southey, 279.
Spenser and Chaucer, 25, 45, 72 (*n*), 121 (*n*), 132, 146, 176, 181 (*n*), 185, 195 (*n*), 205, 216, 242.
Squire of Dames, 284.
Squire's Tale, 74 (*n*), 108 *seq.*, 216, 320.
St. Agnes' Eve (Keats's), 169 (*n*), 298.
St. Agnes' Eve (Tennyson's), 244.
St. Dorothy, 133.
Steele, 220 (*n*), 268.
Steevens, 194 (*n*).
Stephen, L., 166 (*n*).
Sterne, 99.
Story-telling, Chaucer's gift of, 35.
Stothard, 84.
Swift, 114, 139.
Swinburne, A. C., 133.

Taine, 22 (*n*).
Tasso, 238 (*n*), 268, 323 (*n*), 326 (*n*).
Teares of the Muses, 150, 160 (*n*), 162 *seq.*
Tempest, 194 (*n*).
Temple of Glas, 108 (*n*).
Tennyson, 51, 69, 183 (*n*), 185, 202, 209, 237, 244, 356.
Terence, 101.
Testament of Cresseid, 138.
Thackeray, 265.
Thistle and the Rose, 140 (*n*).
Thompson, F., 211 (*n*).
Thompson, W., 286 *seq.*
Thomson, J., 96, 293.
Tickell, 337.
Titian, 202, 242.
Tolstoy, 70.
Translations, Spenser's, 153.
Tristram, 34.
Troilus and Cressida, 8, 22, 47 *seq.*, 83, 101, 102, 131, 345.
Troilus and Cressida, Shakespeare's, 109 (*n*).
Trouvère, Chaucer as, 22.
Truth, 115 (*n*).
"*'Twas when the seas were roaring*," 106 (*n*).

Two Gentlemen of Verona, 193 (*n*).
Tyrwhitt, T., 1, 2, 83.

Virgil, 77 (*n*), 244.
Virgil's Gnat, 150, 163 *seq.*
View of the State of Ireland, 145 *seq.*
Virtuoso, 283.
Visions of the World's Vanity, 155.
Voragine, 30.

Warton, T., 96, 108 (*n*), 194, 216 (*n*), 270 *seq.*, 320.
Watts, 121 (*n*).
West, G., 290.
White Doe of Rylstone, 279.
Wife of Bath's Tale, 11, 130, 330.
Wordes of the Host to the Frankelin, 81 (*n*).
Wordsworth, 1, 107, 122, 123, 131, 166 (*n*), 172, 176, 186, 249 (*n*), 257, 259, 279, 300, 358.

Yeats, W. B., 152 (*n*), 261, 262.

GLASGOW: PRINTED AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

6s. nett.

POETRY AND PROSE

LONDON: CONSTABLE & CO.

Whether or not Mr. Jack has succeeded in his aim does not greatly matter. He has in either case produced a series of critical essays of singular value and marked individuality.—*The Athenæum.*

The virtue of his criticism resides in his intuitions, in his immediate sense of poetical values, in his spiritual tact and discrimination.—*The Nation* (American).

Its contents may not correspond with its title, and it contains many things which may offend, but as a collection of essays not on poetry generally, but on certain poets, whom the writer somewhat arbitrarily selects, it contains much that is of great and occasionally of the highest interest.—Mr. T. E. Page in *The Bookman.*

It is an unusually stimulating book.—Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie in *The Manchester Guardian.*

In Wordsworth Mr. Jack finds his most congenial subject. This essay is startlingly intimate; he writes here from a mind grown rich with poring on the thing it loves.—Mr. James A. Mackereth in *The Yorkshire Daily Observer.*

Mr. Jack's critical survey is one of the most penetrating discussions of Emerson's poetry yet produced.—Professor Herford in *The Modern Languages Review.*

He makes several new points about Arnold, and his study of Meredith's poetry is one of the most illuminating of the various efforts that have been made to enlighten the darkness of that difficult world.—*The Times.*

Regarding such criticism, one is apt to be over-critical. And we hasten to say that there are few pages in this volume that do not contain some precise and arresting judgment obviously the outcome of sedulous reflection, few that are not lit up with a clear and penetrating ray of insight. "Emerson's doctrine of the Infinite," besides being a clearly reasoned vindication of first principles, is Mr. Jack's finest piece of work on his imaginative side, while his elaborate analysis of Meredith's verse stands first as an intellectual achievement.—*Westminster Gazette.*